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# THE MAGI

## HOW THEY RECOGNISED CHRIST'S STAR

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## HOW THEY RECOGNISED CHRIST'S STAR

BY

LIEUT.-COL. G. MACKINLAY

LATE ROYAL ARTILLERY

AN OBSERVER, TRANSIT OF VENUS EXPEDITION TO JAMAICA 1882

AUTHOR OF THE TEXT BOOKS OF GUNNERY 1883 AND 1887

WITH A PREFACE BY

PROF. SIR W. M. RAMSAY, HON. D.C.L., ETC.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON MCMVII

TO MY WIFE

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

# PREFACE

When I promised to write a Preface to this book, I intended to speak of the character of Eastern expression, and to emphasise the necessity of keeping this character in mind when one reads the great religious books of the East; but Colonel Mackinlay has done this in his Preface so well that it would be out of place to add anything more on the subject. The first six chapters seem to me admirably calculated to place the reader amid the scene of the events which the book discusses. They are full of observations of the highest interest and as I believe of great value.

The principle on which the reasoning of the book is mainly founded is that in the Bible "figurative language was very generally em-

ployed while the circumstances to which the figure referred were actually occurring". The figures (except in the Pauline letters) are for the most part derived from external nature, which is characteristic of a Southern people, living mostly in the open air. In a little book, *The Education of Christ*, I have tried to show by some examples how much of the life of Jesus was lived in the open air, and how important this fact is for the interpretation of His words and thought. Colonel Mackinlay has carried this process very much farther, with a skill and knowledge which I do not possess. Some of his examples may seem to press the words too hard, some to be a little fanciful; but I believe they will for the most part bear strict testing. The ingenuity, simplicity and convincing character of many of them make the reading of the book a continual pleasure to me. An exception has to be made only in respect of the seventh chapter, in parts of which the reasoning is of the Western and

nineteenth century character, and the Magians of the story are transformed into "earnest servants of God".

In regard to the chronology of the Gospels, Colonel Mackinlay has by a totally different line of reasoning reached the same results as I have, except that he champions the date 8 B.C. for the birth of Christ, whereas I have defended the possibility of the year 6 B.C.

On the whole, though the evidence is still not conclusive, it seems more probable that his date 8 B.C. is right. The facts are as follows. It is clearly demonstrated that "there was a system of periodic enrolment in the Province Syria according to a fourteen-years cycle, and the first enrolment was made in the year 8-7 B.C." (*Christ Born in Bethlehem*, p. 170). Such was the rule, but in the carrying out of such an extensive and novel operation in the Roman world delays sometimes occurred, for the distance of a province from Rome and other reasons prevented the immediate ful-

filment of a regulation; and an example of such delay for about two years (as revealed by a recent discovery), is quoted in my subsequent article "Corroboration" in the *Expositor*, November, 1901, pp. 321 f. Accordingly I concluded that "the enrolment in Herod's kingdom was probably delayed for some time," *viz.*, until autumn 6 B.C. (*Christ Born in Bethlehem*, p. 174). While such a delay is possible, however, it has against it the distinct testimony of Tertullian that the enrolment in Syria at which Jesus was born was made by Saturninus, who as we know governed the Province 9-7 B.C. The evidence which determined me to favour the date 6 B.C. as more probable is distinctly slighter in character than that which supports the date 8 B.C.

W. M. RAMSAY

# AUTHOR'S PREFACE

We hear much of twentieth century light and accuracy, but in order to understand some of the allusions in the New Testament, it is well for us to endeavour to picture to ourselves the points of view and methods of expression of the first century. The aim of this book is to revive, as it were, the trains of thought familiar to the first readers of Scripture; twentieth century progress enables us to do this in great measure, as it has placed most valuable archæological discoveries at our disposal, and modern facilities for travel and intercommunication have given us opportunities to learn the habits and modes of thought of modern Easterns, who, in many ways, have inherited, almost unchanged, the methods of their ancestors of two or three millenniums ago.

It is hoped that this book may interest some of the rapidly increasing number of Easterns who speak our language; although the Bible is perfectly suited to the needs of all mankind, it is very evident that, written, as it was, by Easterns, it primarily appeals to the Eastern cast of mind. It is also trusted that this book may induce Jews to consider some of the points in which the New Testament harmonises with and fulfils the older Scriptures which they have so carefully preserved.

On this point the words of Professor Stalker[1] deserve our attention. He says: "The form of the preaching of Jesus was essentially Jewish. The Oriental mind does not work in the same way as the mind of the West. Our thinking and speaking, when at their best, are fluent, expansive, closely reasoned. The kind of discourse which we admire is one which takes up an important subject, divides it out into different branches, treats it fully under each of the heads,

[1] *The Life of Jesus Christ*, p. 65, Professor J. Stalker, D.D.

closely articulates part to part, and closes with a moving appeal to the feelings, so as to sway the will to some practical result. The Oriental mind, on the contrary, loves to brood long on a single point, to turn it round and round, to gather up all the truth about it into a focus, and pour it forth in a few pointed and memorable words. It is concise, epigrammatic, oracular. A Western speaker's discourse is a systematic structure, or like a chain in which link is firmly knit to link; an Oriental's is like the sky at night, full of innumerable burning points shining forth from a dark background." In the same strain Professor Sayce tersely advises us "to think Orientally" in order to understand the Bible aright.

Let us modern English and Americans therefore remember that there is a fashion and style of expression peculiar to every age and to every country. Books are nowadays very plentiful indeed, and consequently the modern author aims at clearness and obviousness, so

that the busy reader may quickly take in all his meaning with as little trouble as possible; but when books were only written by hand, and when consequently they were very much fewer in number, more time was given to the perusal of each volume. The Eastern reader, with his contemplative mind, meditated over his books, and therefore immediate obviousness was not such an important object with the ancient Eastern as it now is with the modern Western author; we must remember also that the grand themes considered by the inspired writers demand meditation and thought (Josh. i. 8; Ps. cxix. 48; 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16). The Bible may be compared to some old-world garden, which is not all displayed to view at once; there are many inviting paths leading to hidden beauties, not noticed by the casual observer, but which well repay the closest investigation. No one has yet found all the depths of meaning in the sacred Word.

Who has not noticed the difficulty of Natha-

niel, when he said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John i. 46), and of some of the multitude at the last Feast of Tabernacles, when they said, "What! doth Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" (John vii. 41, 42; Ps. cxxxii. 11; Mic. v. 2), and again, when the Pharisees said, "Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John vii. 52)? *We* know, from the beginnings of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, that Christ *was* of David's lineage, and that He *was* born at Bethlehem according to the prophecies; but there is no record whatever of the immediate explanation of the difficulty, either to Nathaniel, to the multitude, or to the Pharisees.

Can we therefore wonder if less important subjects are left in such a way that a little searching is needed in order to find out the truth? How many Bible difficulties have

vanished during the past fifty years? And doubtless many more will disappear with further searching. The Scriptures court the most thorough investigation, but it must be patient and reverent—not hasty and superficial; "Seek, and ye shall find" (Matt. vii. 7).

In these days when criticism is directed to the internal evidences of the Scriptures, deductions drawn from the harmonies considered in the following pages should claim special attention. The thoughtful reader will not only be interested in the inferences by which various dates are established, but he will further conclude (if he agrees with those inferences) that a result of infinitely greater importance is obtained, because it must follow that strong support is given to the arguments for the authenticity of the Gospels—a support all the more valuable because it is of an indirect and unsuspected nature, since chronological matters were regarded as of very little importance during the first few centuries of the Christian

era. The fact that definite dates can be deduced from harmonies in the Gospels, in conjunction with well-authenticated historical data, negatives any idea of the forgery, want of authenticity or late date of the Gospels. The veracity of the Old Testament is also maintained, because it is quoted as authoritative so frequently in the Gospels.

The authenticity of the Scriptures being acknowledged, its own claims to be divinely inspired must be received (2 Sam. xxiii. 2; 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16; 2 Peter i. 20, 21). Although written by many different men, under different circumstances, and at many different periods of time, the numerous harmonies and the unity pervading the whole of Scripture further establish these claims beyond dispute.

The Scriptural quotations are in the words of the Revised Version except when otherwise mentioned, Dr. Weymouth's translation of *The New Testament in Modern Speech* being indicated by the initials *W. T.*

The device on the cover of this book is copied from the silver star which marks the spot in the grotto of the Nativity at Bethlehem, reputed to have been the birthplace of Christ. The church which surrounds it is said to be the most ancient Christian building in existence: the oldest part of it dating from the time of Constantine.[1]

As the last three diagrams, IV., V. and VI., are often referred to in the text, they have been placed at the end of the book; they unfold and pull out sideways, for the sake of easy reference when reading any page.

Parts of this book have already appeared in the *Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, in *Watchword and Truth*, Boston, U.S.A., in *The Homiletic Review*, in *The American Antiquarian*, Chicago, U.S.A., and in *The Churchman*.

The author sincerely thanks Professor Sir W. M. Ramsay for his valuable Preface. He also thanks Syed Ali Bilgrāmi, Lecturer

[1] See *Gleanings in Holy Fields*, p. 46, Rev. H. MacMillan, D.D.

in Marāthi, Cambridge; the Rev. A. H. F. Boughey, Senior Dean, Trin. Coll. Camb.; W. Carruthers, Esq., F.R.S.; T. Pinches, Esq., LL.D.; the Rev. Professor Sanday, D.D., Christ Church, Oxford; and the Very Rev. Dean Spence-Jones, of Gloucester, who have each contributed an important note. He also thanks A. C. D. Crommelin, Esq., F.R.A.S., and W. Wickham, Esq., F.R.A.S., who have supplied data, giving the periods of shining of the Morning Star in ancient times. Many residents in Eastern lands have kindly replied to his questions, and have furnished him with valuable information about the habits and modes of thought of modern Easterns; lastly he gratefully acknowledges the many helpful suggestions made by his daughter in the revision of the proofs.

G. M.

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# SUNRISE.

But yonder comes the powerful King of Day,
Rejoicing in the East. The lessening cloud,
The kindling azure, and the mountain's brow
Illumed with fluid gold, his near approach
Betoken glad. Lo! now apparent all,
Aslant the dew-bright earth, and colour'd air,
He looks in boundless majesty abroad;
And sheds the shining day, that burnished plays
On rocks, and hills, and towers, and wandering streams,
High gleaming from afar. Prime cheerer, Light!
Of all material beings first and best!
Efflux divine! Nature's resplendent robe!
Without whose vesting beauty all were wrapt
In unessential gloom; and thou O Sun!
Soul of surrounding worlds! in whom best seen
Shines out thy Maker! may I sing of thee!

—*Thomson's Seasons*, "Summer".

Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if Thou be near;
O may no earth-born cloud arise,
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes!

—*J. Keble.*

# CHAPTER I.

## SUNRISE AND THE MORNING STAR.

(A) IMPORTANCE OF SUNRISE AMONG THE ANCIENTS.

(*a*) *Scripture references to Sunrise.*

(B) SUN WORSHIP.

(*a*) *Construction of Sun Temples.*

(*b*) *Solar discs* (see Fig. I., p. 12).

(C) THE TABERNACLE OF THE LORD COMPARED WITH AN ANCIENT SUN TEMPLE.

(*a*) *Points of likeness.*

(*b*) *The Tabernacle unique in having a central pillar in front* (see Fig. II., p. 12).

(D) SIMILE OF CHRIST TO THE SUN.

(E) EARLY RISING.

(*a*) *Scripture references to early rising.*

(F) USES OF THE MORNING STAR.

(*a*) *Instances of the Morning Star being regarded as the Herald of Dawn.*

(*b*) *Worship of the Morning Star* (see Fig. III., p. 12)

(*c*) *The Ancients possibly knew that the Planet Venus assumes a Crescent Form at times*

(*d*) *The Turkish Flag.*

(*e*) *The Morning Star in Astrology.*

(*f*) *Figurative allusions to the Morning Star.*

(G) SIMILE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO THE MORNING STAR.

(*a*) *Scripture References.*

(*b*) *Three memorable occasions when John preceded Christ.*

NOTE.

*Explanation of the Movements of the Morning Star.*

## (A) IMPORTANCE OF SUNRISE AMONG THE ANCIENTS.

When the human race was a few thousand years younger than it is at present, Sunrise was pre-eminently the type of increasing power among all the civilised races of the world who have left us any literary remains. They all lived in more Southern latitudes than we do in England, with much clearer atmosphere, less cloud, and more gorgeous sky colouring. Sunrise was therefore a much more impressive sight to the ancient dwellers in the East than it is to us in England at the present time. A modern commentator[1] writes as follows on this point: "Though I had seen the beauty of Sunrise in these Northern climes, I had never felt the truth of David's language, till over the hills of Moab I saw, thrice in one week, the Sun rise, bursting up into view, with a giant's

[1] *The Psalms, their Spiritual Teaching* (Ps. xix., p. 112), Rev. J. Elder Cumming, D.D.

strength and eagerness, from my window to the north of Jerusalem."

We must also take into consideration the fact that our inventions of good artificial lights have caused a habit of sitting up late at night, with consequent late rising in the morning, which prevent numbers of us from being familiar with the beauties of daybreak, even when they are well displayed, as is sometimes the case in the very early hours of a summer morning in our own country.

Consequently the Bible references to Sunrise do not come to us with so much force as they must have done to the first readers, who lived in more Southern climes and who frequently witnessed the breaking of the day.

There are, however, two powerful Eastern nations, Persia and Japan, who still adhere to the ancient admiration of the glories of the dawn, as they each employ the symbol of the rising Sun for their national emblem.

### (*a*) *Scripture References to Sunrise.*

Abundant use is made in the Scriptures of Sunrise as a figure of strength and joy, as is shown by the following passages: "Let them that love Him

be as the Sun when he goeth forth in his might" (Jud. v. 31). "One that ruleth over men righteously, . . . shall be as the light of the morning, when the Sun riseth" (2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4). "Though there be darkness, it shall be as the morning" (Job xi. 17). "The Sun . . . rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course" (Ps. xix. 4, 5). "The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. iv. 18, marg.). "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great Light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the Light shined" (Isa. ix. 2). The *shadow of death* is another name for *night*, as is seen from its contrast with the *morning* (Amos v. 8), consequently "the Light" is the Sun. "Then shall thy Light break forth as the morning" (Isa. lviii. 8). "His going forth is sure as the morning. . . . Thy judgments are as the Light that goeth forth" (Hos. vi. 3, 5). "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the Sun" (Matt. xiii. 43). "The Day-spring from on high shall visit us" (Luke i. 78); see also Job xxxviii. 12; Ps. xxxvii. 6, l. 2, xciv. 1; Isa. lx. 1-3, etc.

On the other hand the withdrawal of the light

of the Sun, and also of that of the Moon and Stars, is an emblem of sorrow: "The Sun and the Moon are darkened, and the Stars withdraw their shining" (Joel iii. 15). Intensity of sorrow is shown by an unexpected quenching of the grateful light of day. "Her Sun is gone down while it was yet day" (Jer. xv. 9). In the same strain a period of lasting joy after sorrow is spoken of as a time when "Thy Sun shall no more go down, . . . the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Isa. lx. 20).

In our days artists dwell on the beauty of Sunset, which is only alluded to in Scripture as an image of sorrow, the standpoints of then and now being so essentially different.

The inferiority of Sunset to Sunrise among the ancients is well emphasised by the wording of the beginning of the reply of an old-time Emperor of Japan to an Emperor of China who had slighted him, which was to the effect that the Emperor of the land of the rising Sun addressed himself to the Emperor of the land of the setting Sun; implying of course that waxing power was contrasted with waning power.[1]

[1] "Chinese Expansion Historically Reviewed," *Proc. of the Central Asian Soc.*, 1905, p. 21, Baron Suyematsu.

## (B) SUN WORSHIP.

The Sun was an object of worship by the great majority of the nations of antiquity, and the ruins of temples in its honour still remain scattered over the face of the earth from China in the East to Peru in the West, Egypt being a great centre of the cult.

### (*a*) *Construction of Sun Temples.*

Sun temples were oriented and constructed with a central passage in such a manner that on one or two mornings in the year, the rising Sun might send its horizontal beams through the middle of the temple buildings, and then illumine an idol or sacred shrine in an innermost chamber; on such occasions very special ceremonies and worship of the Sun were carried out. In some temples this took place twice in the year, at the two equinoxes, when the orientation of the temple was due East and West; in others there was only one special day of worship, generally the longest one in the year as at Stonehenge, but occasionally it was at the shortest day; in both these latter cases the orientation of course depended on the latitude of the place where the temple was built.

(*b*) *Solar Discs* (see Fig. I., p. 12).

It must have been no uncommon sight in Bible lands, in Bible times, to see a few flat clouds or some mist low on the horizon at dawn in the Eastern sky, and when the Sun rose they must have caught some of its radiance, almost appearing to be a part of the luminary itself; a very natural poetic idea would call them wings to assist its upward flight.

In Malachi iv. 2, we are told, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings." And in Psalm cxxxix. 9, wings are also associated with the rising Sun, in the expression "wings of the morning".

A somewhat similar thought seems to be carried out in the numerous carved images of the solar disc (emblems of divinity) with long lateral wings (see Fig. I.,[1] p. 12), so often to be seen in ancient temples, etc. The differences in design in Egyptian and in Assyrian winged Suns may be due not

[1] In Fig. I. the sketch of the Egyptian winged disc is from a mummy case about B.C. 1300; the Assyrian disc is from a bas relief about B.C. 800; both of the originals are in the British Museum. The Hittite disc is copied from *The History of Art in Sardinia, Judæa, Syria, and Asia Minor*, vol. ii., p. 62, Perrot and Chipiez.

only to differences in the national art of the two countries, but also to the differences in the morning haze of rainless Egypt and of the more frequently clouded sky of the country near the hills to the north of Assyria. The winged solar discs, emblems of divinity, are not improbably the Sun images forbidden to the Hebrews (Lev. xxvi. 30, etc.). Let us not be alarmed at this coincidence between the forbidden images and the figurative language of the Bible in Malachi and the Psalms quoted above. Scripture allows and uses the language of imagery, but it forbids the construction of the actual images themselves for the purposes of worship.

Sun worship has ceased to exist in Europe, but it is still prevalent among Hindus and others.

## (C) THE TABERNACLE OF THE LORD COMPARED WITH AN ANCIENT SUN TEMPLE.

### (*a*) *Points of Likeness.*

Comparing an ordinary ancient heathen (Egyptian or Greek) temple with the Tabernacle of the Lord in the wilderness, we find a general agreement in the following points: each was constructed

to face the East,[1] each was rectangular in plan, symmetrical on either side of a central line, and provided with an inner sanctuary, and with rows of pillars. But when we come to the arrangement of the pillars we find a vital difference.

In heathen temples dedicated to astronomical deities, as already mentioned, a clear course is allowed down the centre from the entrance, to allow the light of the rising Sun (or Star) to shine into the inmost holy recess. This necessitates an even number of pillars on the front. It may perhaps be said that beauty of appearance also demands a central entrance.

Some ancient rock-cut tombs[2] present exceptions to this rule by having *three* heavy pillars in front giving a somewhat sombre unpleasing effect, perhaps specially arranged in order to be emblematic of the purpose to which the caves are devoted; in one case[3] the central pillar is just in front of the entrance and thus blocks out the light.

[1] Heathen temples directed to the rising of the Sun at midsummer or midwinter or to the rising of any star not on the equator, did not of course face due East, though they pointed in an Easterly direction. But the Temple and Tabernacle of the Lord, and heathen temples directed to the rising of the Sun at the equinoxes, fronted exactly to the East.

[2] At Hambar Kaïa, Myra and Pinara, see pp. 200, 367, 370, *Hist. of Art in Phrygia, Lydia, Caria and Lycia*, Perrot and Chipiez.

[3] At Gherdek Kaïasi, see *Hist. of Art in Sardinia, Judæa*, etc., Perrot and Chipiez, vol. ii., p. 179.

(*b*) *The Tabernacle of the Lord unique in having a Central Pillar in Front* (see Fig. II., p. 12).

It is consequently remarkable that the number of pillars in front of the tabernacle was *odd;* while the number placed between the Holy Place and the most Holy was *even* (Exod. xxvi. 32, 37, xxxvi. 36, 38). See Fig. II., p. 12, which gives two possible designs (A) and (B)[1] of the Tabernacle.

Some think that the central pillar was necessary, in order to carry one end of a ridge pole. See Fig. II. (B). But even if this were so, the light of the rising Sun would still have been obstructed. It would not have been difficult to have carried the ridge pole (if it existed) on a short cross piece supported on two pillars, if an unobstructed central space had been desired.

> This latter design, however, is not at all probable, as no ridge pole is mentioned in Scripture; if there had been one, the consequent increase in height would have prevented the curtains from entirely covering the structure, and thus the typical teaching would have been impaired. In the rainless desert a ridge pole is not required for the short stretch of ten cubits. Bedouin tents have none, nor have the large flat

[1] See the *Crit. and Ex. Bible Cyclopædia*, Rev. Canon A. R. Fausset, D.D.

## WINGED SOLAR DISCS

FIG. I.

## THE TABERNACLE

FIG. II.

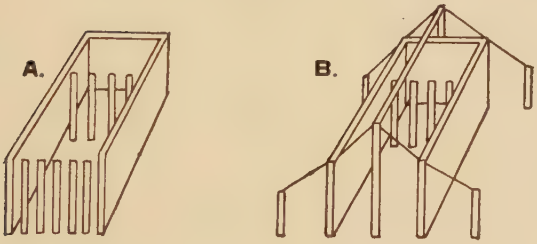


FIG.III.

## BABYLONIAN FIGURES

*To face p. 12*

*shāmiānahs* which are frequently used in some parts of India.

The glory of the LORD was within the most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and of the Temple (Exod. xl. 35; 2 Chron. vii. 1, 2; see also Rev. xxi. 23, xxii. 5); consequently there was no need to make arrangements for light to come in from outside. Even had the veil been lifted, and the strict orders against entrance into the most Holy Place been relaxed, the odd central pillar would have prevented the light of the rising Sun from entering effectively. May we not therefore look upon this central pillar as a protest against the worship of the orb of day?

Solomon's Temple was the direct successor to the Tabernacle, and we find several of the dimensions of the one simply doubled in the other (Exod. xxvi. 16, 18, 22; 1 Kings vi. 2, 20), thus :—

| | Length. | Breadth. | Height of most Holy Place. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tabernacle . . | 30 cubits. | 10 cubits. | 10 cubits. |
| Temple . . | 60 ,, | 20 ,, | 20 ,, |

The four pillars between the Holy and most Holy Places in the Tabernacle gave five openings;

these were replaced in the Temple by one opening (central by symmetry) one-fifth of the whole, furnished with doors or doorways; two-fifths of the front on each side were presumably boarded up (1 Kings vi. 31, 32).

The five pillars on the front, allowing entrance to the Holy Place in the Tabernacle, gave six openings, these were replaced in the Temple by two openings, each furnished with doors, which symmetry demanded should be on each side of a central pillar; each of these doorways occupied one-eighth of the front. Had these doors followed exactly the same rule as those leading into the most Holy Place, they would each have been one-sixth of the front; but the increase of actual frontage over that of the Tabernacle permitted the proportionate width of the doorways to be reduced; thus though *some* change was made, the central pillar arrangement, which blocked the entrance of the Sun's rays, apparently remained unaltered: see marginal reading of the Authorised Version (1 Kings vi. 33, 34).

As the Tabernacle of the LORD and the Temple were each oriented due East and West, and as the two most important feasts of Jehovah—Pass-

over and Tabernacles—were held at the full Moons near the vernal and autumnal equinoxes; the rising Sun would be just in front of the entrance on each occasion, and the time of year for each feast would thus be marked out.

It is interesting, also, to compare the arrangement of the Tabernacle and of the Temple with that of our modern Cathedrals.

Being doubtless built on a site where heathen worship had formerly been conducted, St. Peter's at Rome carries out the old arrangement of temples in facing the East; like a heathen temple, but unlike the Temple and Tabernacle of the Lord, it has an even number of pillars on its front.

Before our English Cathedrals were built a revulsion of feeling against any traces of Sun worship apparently took place, and so (notwithstanding the fact that the Tabernacle and Temple of the Lord faced East), they will be found (including St. Paul's) to face to the West —the exact opposite of the arrangement of heathen temples, of St. Peter's, and also of the Tabernacle of the Lord. In most of our Cathedrals there is the gable western front, which may be said to resemble a tent, and we may perhaps trace the influence of the central pillar of the Tabernacle in the shaft which is to be found in the middle of the central western doorway of some, *e.g.* in York and Ely in England, and in Nôtre Dame in Paris. York Minster likewise has a central shaft in the large western window, thus prolonging the central line formed by the central pillar in the doorway.

The row of pillars (even in number) on the western

front of St. Paul's in London is doubtless due to the prevalence of the Renaissance style of architecture, which happened to be in vogue at the comparatively recent time of its building, when all thought of Sun worship had been forgotten.

## (D) SIMILE OF CHRIST TO THE SUN.

Occupied as we are with our own inventions and artificial lights, we do not now regard the Sun and Sunrise with the admiration of the Ancients. This difference in standpoint sometimes leads to a careless rendering of Scripture, as is instanced in Holman Hunt's popular and beautiful picture, in which "The Light of the World" is represented by a lighted lantern in Christ's hand.

The Scripture parallel is a far grander one. When Christ claimed this title it was at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles (John vii. 2, 37, viii. 2, 12), a feast which reminded the Jews of their deliverance from Egypt, and of their Divine leading by the pillar of fire in the wilderness, as stated by Nehemiah in his prayer just after his well-known celebration of the same feast (Neh. ix. 1, 9, 12, 19). Thus, when the Lord Jesus spoke He was doubtless alluding to the large lamps[1] lighted

[1] *The Temple; its Ministry and Services as they were at the Time of Jesus Christ*, pp. 281-85, Rev. Dr. A. Edersheim.

in the Temple court during that feast, which were reminders of the ancient guiding pillar of fire in the wilderness; He said in effect, "I am like the Sun which gives light to all in the world, the man who followeth Me shall have the Light of life"—a greater blessing offered to any one in the whole world, than the Hebrews alone had of old when they followed the pillar of fire, typified by the Temple lamps.

It is clear that the Sun is the meaning of the expression "The Light of the world" from the contexts of both the passages (John viii. 12, and ix. 5). In the former, Christ speaks of the light of life in connection with the light of the world—and the Sun is the sustainer of physical life. In the latter passage, He speaks of working "the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work". Manifestly the figure of the Sun is again employed. Also in John xi. 9, "the Light of this world" is evidently the Sun. See also John xii. 35, 36, 46.

The modern picture with its comparison to the dim light of a lantern thus utterly fails to illustrate this Scripture; on the other hand the Pharisees evidently understood the greatness of the figure,

and the greatness of the claims, because their resentment and opposition were so strongly excited (John viii. 13-59).

Christ is also alluded to as the Sun in the following passages: 2 Sam. xxiii. 4; Ps. lxxxiv. 11; Isa. ix. 2, xlii. 6, xlix. 6, lx. 1-3; Acts xiii. 47; Mal. iv. 2; Luke i. 78, ii. 32; John i. 9; 1 John ii. 8.

## (E) EARLY RISING.

An English poet has described the pleasure of early rising:—[1]

> The first fresh dawn then waked the gladden'd race
> Of uncorrupted man, nor blush'd to see
> The sluggard sleep beneath its sacred beam.
> For their light slumbers gently fumed away;
> And up they rose as vigorous as the Sun.

And again he wrote:—[2]

> Falsely luxurious! will not man awake;
> And, springing from the bed of sloth, enjoy
> The cool, the fragrant, and the silent hour,
> To meditation due, and sacred song?

Our modern habits nevertheless tend to late rising with the majority of educated people, but Easterns are early risers. "At the earliest sign

[1] *Thomson's Seasons*, p. 12, "Spring".
[2] *Thomson's Seasons*, p. 50, "Summer".

of dawn, all India is awake and stirring, long before sunrise."[1]

In Eastern lands the splendours of dawn are familiar to all, and they are such that the Rev. Dr. Newton-Wright of Tabriz, Persia, writes: "The clouds at daybreak are even more glorious than at sunset, every shade of colour is exhibited, with all the hues of the rainbow".

### (*a*) *Scripture References to Early Rising.*

In scriptural times early rising must have been very prevalent, for we find that many events occurred very early in the day; the Hebrew morning sacrifice took place before daybreak in the morning twilight, consequently many of the multitude (Luke i. 10) who prayed without at the hour of incense must have left their homes while it was still dark.

As this was a daily occurrence, it doubtless explains why, when the Apostles were liberated from prison at night by the angel and went to the Temple "just before daybreak" (Acts v. 21, *W. T.*), they found people already there at that early hour.

[1] *Indian Life in Town and Country*, p. 95, H. Compton.

Many other instances of early rising occur throughout the Bible, Joseph's brothers were sent away "as soon as the morning was light" (Gen. xliv. 3). Saul and Samuel rose early "about the spring of the day" (1 Sam. ix. 26). Achish ordered David to rise up early in the morning and depart as soon as it was light (1 Sam. xxix. 10). The Psalmist said "I prevented the dawning of the morning" (Ps. cxix. 147). Watchers looked for the morning (Ps. cxxx. 6). The virtuous woman in Proverbs (xxxi. 15) is described as rising early "while it is yet night". Our Lord rose in the morning "a great while before day" in order to pray (Mark i. 35). "At break of day" (John viii. 2, *W. T.*) He entered the temple." "As soon as it was day, the assembly of the elders of the people was gathered together," on the morning of the crucifixion (Luke xxii. 66), see also Mark xv. 1. At earliest dawn Mary Magdalen went to the sepulchre very "early, while it was yet dark" (John xx. 1, *W. T.*). A considerable part of the people were shepherds, and they were obliged to watch over their flocks by night on account of wolves (John x. 12); and the fisherman also toiled at night (John xxi. 3, 4).

Secular classical records tell of the same habits of early rising; thus Martial[1] was wakened before sunrise by the noise of a school close to his house, and he complains, "What right have you to annoy me, O wicked schoolmaster? . . . . the crested cocks have not yet broken silence, and already you thunder with scolding and stripes".

## (F) USES OF THE MORNING STAR.

Consequently we can well understand that the herald of dawn, the planet Venus, was eagerly looked for, and was readily recognised by the Hebrews and Eastern peoples in general, who were unprovided with the time-keepers of modern civilisation.

It must also be remembered, that in Southern latitudes the paths of both the Sun and the Morning Star are more steeply inclined to the horizon at the time of rising than with us; the result with the Sun is to shorten the period of twilight before daybreak, as the angular depression of the great luminary below the horizon is greater than with us at equal intervals of time before dawn;

[1] Lib. ix., Ep. lxx., *Martial and the Moderns*, p. 145, A. Amos. See also *Juvenal*, vii., 222-26.

hence the morning twilight in Southern regions gives less warning of dawn, and the heralding of the Morning Star is more needed than it is with us. The effect of a lower latitude on the Morning Star is to cause it to attain a good altitude in the heavens more rapidly, and consequently it is more conspicuous than in our Northern climes.

In Southern regions the sky is more generally free from clouds and therefore the herald of dawn is less often hidden than with us.

### (*a*) *Instances of the Morning Star being Regarded as the Herald of Dawn.*

The East moves slowly and we still find the Morning Star used for the purpose of heralding the dawn. When soldiers march in India it is necessary to start at the earliest light in order to avoid as much as possible of the great heat of the Sun during the coming day, and they therefore have to rise while it is still night; it has been customary in some cases for a native servant to call his English master with the words "tárá nikalá hai, sahib—the (Morning) Star has appeared, Sir";[1] and *choukidárs* (night watchmen) in

[1] *Letter* from Lieut.-Col. W. D. Forster, late R.A.

Indian cantonments have been heard using the same expression towards the end of the night.[1] "When a Bedouin (in Moab) comes into the tent before dawn, the first thing he is asked is, 'Has the Star risen?' Just as a lazy British workman, we may say, turns over to his friend and says, 'Is it six o'clock yet?' so the lazy Bedouin turns round and says, 'Has the Morning Star risen?'"[2] In Turkey "rising by the Morning Star, if one is to do early work . . . is so common, that it amuses us to hear that it is at all questioned".[3] Hence the Morning Star became the figure for a herald, and modern Persians[4] allude to it as a well-known type of a forerunner: in doing so they are probably perpetuating the ancient Assyrian idea, since Dr. Pinches states that the Assyrian name for the Morning Star is *Delebat*, which means *she who proclaims.*

The use of the Morning Star as herald of day is not of course confined to dwellers in the East; thus in Galicia, N.W. Spain, fishermen who go out in their boats at dawn, prepare their nets before they start when

[1] *Statement* by W. T. Martin, late I.C.S.

[2] *Transactions, Victoria Institute*, vol. xxxvii., 1905, p. 153, H. Harding.

[3] *Letter* from the Rev. C. S. Sanders, Aintab, Turkey in Asia.

[4] *Letter* from Rev. J. Newton-Wright, D.D., Persia.

the Morning Star gives them notice that it is time to do so.[1] They call it *el lucero del dia*—the light of day, or the light which indicates the coming of day.

In the far East, in China, Venus is at the present day used as a time-keeper by travellers,[2] and the fact that the ancient Chinese also regarded the Morning Star as the herald of dawn, is shown by the following translation from *The Book of Odes* (about B.C. 750) by Dr. Legge:—[3]

> Says oor gudewife, "The cock is crawin',"
> Quoth oor gudeman, "The day is dawin',"
> "Get up, gudeman, an' tak' a spy,
> See gin the Mornin' Star be high."

The heralding of Sunrise by the Morning Star is a scene of indescribable beauty, specially in the East, where it is to be seen in all its loveliness. A modern traveller[4] writes of one of the most entrancing views which he had ever witnessed as follows: "When crossing the hot plains of the Jordan in the early morning I beheld the glory of the bright and Morning Star, over the hills of Bashan, in the glow of the approaching sunrise! My vocabulary fails me!"

[1] *Letter* from B. Smith, Bueu. Prov. de Pontevedra, Spain.

[2] *Statement* by Dr. Howard Taylor, China Inland Mission.

[3] *The Bible in the World*, a monthly record of the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society, April, 1907, p. 117.

[4] *A Yankee in Pigmy Land*, p. 174, W. E. Geil.

(*b*) *Worship of the Morning Star* (see Fig. III., p. 12).

These obviously practical uses of the Morning Star invested it with importance, and when the worship of the Sun and Moon spread over the heathen world, the planet Venus came in for a large share of adoration, being specially identified with the goddess of love. In Babylon, under the name of Ištar, it was a chief object of worship, at one time a rival to the greater divinities of the Sun and the Moon.

Babylonian boundary-stones still exist on which are depicted figures of the Sun (Šamaš), Moon (Sin), and Venus (Ištar)—each orb being represented of the same size (see Fig. III., p. 12, which is sketched from a stone of about B.C. 1120 now in the British Museum); accompanying inscriptions contain the curses of the divinities, represented by the figures, on any one who shall dare to move the boundary-stone.

> Compare the Mosaic warning and imprecation with reference to the neighbour's landmark (Deut. xix. 14, xxvii. 17). See also Job xxiv. 2; Prov. xxii. 28, xxiii. 10; Hosea v. 10.

In the British Museum[1] there is a clay tablet

[1] *A Guide to the Babylonian and Assyrian Antiquities, British Museum*, p. 68, E. A. Wallis Budge.

inscribed with a prayer to the goddess Ištar from the Royal Library at Nineveh by Assur-nasir-pal about B.C. 870, and there is also there an Accadian hymn to the same goddess with an Assyrian translation. In them she is styled "Queen of the gods" and "Lady of heaven and earth," consequently Layard and Pinches have both identified Ištar with "the queen of heaven" spoken of in Jeremiah vii. 18, xliv. 17-25. Very important temples in honour of Ištar existed in Nineveh and Babylon, and so much was the latter identified with the worship of this planet that its king was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah (xiv. 12) under the name of Lucifer, day Star, son of the morning, or Morning Star.

Some would tell us that the Greek word ἀστήρ from which our word "star" is derived is akin to the Babylonian name Ištar.

Syed Ali Bilgrāmi, Lecturer in Marāthi at Cambridge, writes: "It is a well-recognised fact that the planet Venus, both as the Morning and the Evening Star, was, under the name of 'Uzzā, an object of special worship by the pagan Arabs of pre-Islamic times. The Syriac poet Isaac of Antioch, who lived in the first half of the fifth century

A.D., testifies to the worship of 'Uzzā by the Arabs of that period, and he further identifies it with Venus.

"Nilus (about A.D. 410) gives an account of a wild Arab tribe, who offered sacrifices of a most revolting nature to the Morning Star under the name of 'Uzzā. As early as the second century A.D. reference to a priest of the goddess occurs in two Sinaitic inscriptions found not far from the district in which the scenes described by Nilus took place. Another Sinaitic inscription mentions the name of 'Abd-al-'Uzzā (servant of 'Uzzā), which at a later period, just before the rise of Islam, became extremely common among the Arabs." It is interesting to note that according to the Babylonian tablets, Arad-Ištar (servant of Ištar[1]) had been common as a man's name among the more ancient Babylonians.

An Arabic love song to the planet still lingers in Morocco.[2]

[1] *Guide to the Bab. and Ass. Antiquities, British Museum*, p. 55, E. A. Wallis Budge.

[2] *Letter* from Cuthbert Nairn, S. Morocco Mission, Marrakesh.

### (*c*) *The Ancients possibly knew that the Planet Venus assumes a Crescent Form at Times.*

The name Ashteroth occurs some sixteen times in the Old Testament (either as the name of the goddess, or of towns called after her), and corresponds to Ištar of the Babylonian tablets. Ashteroth-karnaim, mentioned in the early days of Genesis (xiv. 5), is a very interesting name; the second part of it means "two-horned"; some have consequently supposed that Ashteroth signifies the Moon, but that is contrary to the meaning of the word, which corresponds to Ištar, Astarte and Artemis, etc., except that it is of plural form. It has been thought by some that the name was given to a town between two peaked hills, but Dr. Pinches thinks it is probable that the two-horned planet Venus is intended. This seems to be the true explanation, as a figure[1] of Astarte or Ashteroth (the Babylonian Ištar) has recently been found at Gezer, in which the goddess is provided with metal horns. In very ancient times the Morning and Evening Star were thought to be distinct from each other, and hence it is very

[1] *Transactions, Victoria Institute*, vol. xxxix., p. 233. *Recent Discoveries in Palestine in Relation to the Bible*, Dr. E. W. G. Masterman.

likely that a plural termination was afterwards retained for the name of the planet, even after it was known to be only one celestial body. Like the Moon, and for the same reason, Venus assumes a crescent or horned appearance at times, both as the Morning and as the Evening Star, as is readily seen in a telescope.

In the inscriptions[1] Ištar is described as daughter of Sin (the Moon); Dr. Pinches[2] suggests that the reason may have been that, like the Moon, the planet was known to present a crescent appearance at times.

A Hittite goddess, probably the equivalent of the Assyro-Babylonian Ištar, is represented in a relief near Pterium[3] with a wand bearing a crescent in one hand, and in the other a symbol which much resembles the present astrological and astronomical sign of the planet. If the name *daughter* of the Moon, and if the two horns in the place-name Ashteroth-karnaim, the crescent on the wand of this goddess, and the metal horns on the image of Ištar all refer to the appearance which the planet

[1] *The Descent of Ištar into Hades* and *The Hymn to Ištar*, British Museum Tablet, S. 954.

[2] *Transactions, Victoria Institute*, vol. xxxviii., 1906, p. 266.

[3] Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. ii., p. 456 and plate.

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sometimes assumes; the question arises how did the people of Abraham's time know that the planet sometimes presents a crescent form?

There are some[1] at the present time who assert that they have seen the crescent appearance of the planet with the naked eye, while astronomers apparently deny that this is possible; if a man of very keen vision knows what to look for, it is possible to imagine that he may afterwards discern the crescent with the naked eye; but it seems unlikely that any one, who has not seen the horns of Venus in a telescope, or who has not been told of their existence, should discover them for himself without an instrument. The thought therefore suggests itself, which was held by the astronomer Proctor,[2] that the Ancients must have had some artificial aid to vision, and this idea is strengthened by the fact that a lens of rock crystal was discovered by Layard in the ruins of Nimroud.

But whether the Ancients knew or not that Venus assumes a crescent form at times, the

[1] For a discussion of the possibility of seeing the horns of Venus with the naked eye, see various letters in *Knowledge* from May, 1902, to April, 1903.

[2] *Saturn and its System*. Appendix. *Chaldean Astronomy*, pp. 196, 197, R. A. Proctor.

fact remains, which is of importance for the object we have in view, that they observed the planet with the utmost attention.

The greater visibility of Venus in southern latitudes, and the ease and familiarity with which it is recognised, are emphasised by the fact that at the present day it is no uncommon thing for farmers and others in India to notice the planet in broad daylight.[1]

When at its brightest, Venus can also be seen in full sunlight in England, but only with difficulty, and if carefully looked for in the right place; it is much more easily seen in regions which are nearer the Equator.

### (*d*) *The Turkish Flag.*

The Turkish national emblem of the Crescent is said to represent the Moon.

At the siege of Byzantium[2] by Philip of Macedon in the fourth century B.C. it is stated that the Byzantines were saved from a night surprise by a flash of moonlight which suddenly broke out from behind dark clouds, and that this was the

[1] *Letters* from W. Mackinlay, Moopenaad Peak, Maypady, S. India, and C. Campbell, I.C.S.

[2] *The Crescent and the Cross*, p. 372, E. Warburton.

origin of the Crescent which they adopted for their national sign. But as they linked *a Star* with this Crescent—and both together have since continued to be the national emblem, even after the city of Constantinople was captured by the Turks—this legend does not give a satisfactory explanation, since no mention is made of the origin of the Star.

Taking into consideration the fact that the Sun, Moon and Ištar were all worshipped in Babylon, and that the Persians have adopted the emblem of the Rising Sun, and the Byzantines and their successors that of a Crescent and a Star; it seems most probable that the Turkish national device is derived (modified by the Greeks) from the ancient Babylonian worship of the Morning Star, and (perhaps) of the Moon.

The idea of increasing or coming power is thus apparent in all the three emblems on the banners of these two modern powers—the rising Sun, the Crescent [1] or waxing Moon, and the Morning Star which foretells dawn—each is an inspiriting national sign.

Notwithstanding the popular idea, the Crescent

[1] Crescent (from Latin *crescens*, increasing): the word does not therefore properly describe the *waning* moon, though the shape is the same (reversed).

is not a sign of Mahomedan power as such. The Turks, when they captured Constantinople (A.D. 1453), simply continued the device which had been in use by their Christian predecessors in that city for over a thousand years. That it is not a Mahomedan religious emblem is established by the fact that modern Christian Armenians, who are persecuted by Mahomedans, embroider this national device on tablecloths, pillows,[1] etc.

Charles I. King of Naples and Sicily founded a *Christian* order of knighthood in 1268 named *The Crescent;* this died out, but it was reinstituted in 1464 by René, Duke of Anjou; it had a crescent badge with the motto "Loz (laus) en croissant" —"Praise by increasing".

The Crescent is *absent* from the flags of Mahomedan powers which have not been under Turkish influence; but it is to be seen (generally surmounted by a cross) on some Russian churches, *e.g.* the one at Vevey, Lake of Geneva; and this fact is considered to be a proof of the Byzantine origin of the National Church of Russia.[2]

[1] These may be seen for sale at the depôt of "The Friends of Armenia," 47 Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.

[2] *Transactions*, *Victoria Institute*, vol. xxxviii., pp. 258, 259, Commander Caborne, C.B.

Dean Spence-Jones kindly sends a valuable historical memorandum on this subject:—

"Ἄρτεμις = φωσφόρος θεά (*cf.* Euripides, *Iph. in Tauris*, 21).

"A colony from Megara founded the Greek city of Byzantium on the site of an ancient Thracian town.

"*Artemis Phosphoros* was adopted as the tutelary deity of Byzantium, and a temple overlooking the Golden Horn was erected in her honour.

"As the goddess of pure light her special symbols were the *Crescent* and the *Star*.

"The crescent (croissant) symbolising *Light in the night*.

"The bright Morning Star symbolising *Light by day*.

"These symbols, the Crescent and the Star, appear in the coinage of Byzantium.

"When the great city of Constantinople, for so many hundred years the longed-for prize, struggled after by generations and nationalities of Mahomedans for centuries, fell at last before Mahomet II., the conqueror adopted as the symbol of his far-reaching powers the ancient symbols of the immemorial city, which his co-religionists had so long hungered

after, and had at last won—the symbols—the Crescent and the Star."

It would thus appear to be evident that the Star on the Turkish flag is derived from the ancient Byzantium worship of the Morning Star goddess φωσφόρος θεά, which in its turn was almost certainly connected with the ancient worship of Ištar by the Babylonians.

Another very celebrated temple to this same goddess Artemis existed in New Testament times in Ephesus, and the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles gives a very graphic picture of the influence of the worship of this goddess, who is called Diana in our Bibles. The Epistle to the Ephesians seems to refer to this worship

(*a*) In the frequent cautions against sins of impurity (Eph. ii. 3, iv. 19, 29, v. 3-5, 11, 12), which were always associated with the worship of this goddess whether called Ištar, 'Uzzā, Aphrodite, Artemis or Venus.

(*b*) In speaking of the true light (Eph. v. 14) contrasted with the light of the goddess.

(*c*) And in referring to the spiritual temple of the Lord (Eph. ii. 21) in contrast with the famous building dedicated to the heathen deity.

An echo of the national emblems of the Turks may be found in English heraldry, still employed by those whose ancestors took part in the Crusades. As the Crescent was the more striking feature, it alone was adopted by a good many, but three or four took both the Crescent and the Star; in one crest, that of Bateman,[1] the Star is almost as large as the Crescent, and so it reminds us of the ancient Babylonian arrangement (see Fig. III.), in which the Moon and the planet, including its rays, are of the same diameter; in this crest the planet is Mars and not Venus, but it is easy to imagine that a warlike crusader would have preferred the martial planet, and in the early days of heraldry there was considerable liberty of choice. There are two or three other English crests [2] consisting of a crescent and a star; in them the Star is very small in comparison to the size of the Moon.

The assumptions of heraldry are often somewhat wild. "Julius Cæsar, it is said, chose a Star for his crest, to denote his descent from Venus." [3] Though it is most unlikely that he really did so, this sen-

[1] *A Display of Heraldry*, p. 430, J. Guillim.

[2] *The Book of Family Crests*, Pl. 90, Figs. 2 and 19, Pl. 96, Fig. 10.

[3] *The Book of Family Crests*, p. 25.

tence shows that in the heraldic mind a single Star may well be associated with the representation of the planet Venus.

### (*e*) *The Morning Star in Astrology.*

The planet played its part in astrology, and at the present time Hindu diviners say that the powers of the evil spirits enchanted by them cease on the rising of the Morning Star; there is a proverbial song in Tamil,[1] of which the following is the translation of a couple of lines:—

> The Star and the singing bird appear;
> Make haste and depart with your spoil.

Counterparts of this couplet also exist in Bangáli and Hindui.[2]

Shakespeare[3] wrote in the same strain of the Morning Star:—

> My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
> For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
> And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger:
> At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
> Troop home to churchyards.

The old alchemists were wont to allude to the planets, and to their supposed astrological influ-

[1] *Letter*, Rev. Canon Margöschis, Tinnevelly.
[2] *Letter*, Rev. J. D. Bate, M.R.A.S., late of Allahabad.
[3] *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, Act. III., Sc. ii.

ences, and hence the custom arose of displaying the astronomical signs of the planets, including that of Venus, on the large coloured bottles in chemists' shops; the coloured bottles are largely retained at the present time, but the astronomical signs of the planets upon them can now be found only in the more old-fashioned places of business.

(*f*) *Figurative Allusions to the Morning Star.*

We thus find from various sources that the Morning Star was far more familiar to ordinary people under the conditions of Bible times than it is to the majority of us at the present moment in England; and consequently any figurative allusions to the planet would come with far more force to the early readers of the Bible than to us. Christ is twice referred to in the Book of the Revelation as the Morning Star (Rev. ii. 28, xxii. 16), apparently in both cases in connection with His rule and government, which will be preliminary to His delivering all over to God the Father (1 Cor. xv. 24).

Christ is also referred to prophetically as a rising Star by Balaam (Num. xxiv. 17). But a Star is not unfrequently used in Scripture as a general symbol of a leader or of one in authority (Gen. xxxvii. 9, 10; Rev. i. 20). There does not appear to be any reason for

supposing that there is any special reference to the Morning Star in this passage in the Book of Numbers.

The Rev. Dr. Jessup of Beyrût states that the Morning Star is spoken of among the Christian population as a type of Christ.

## (G) SIMILE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO THE MORNING STAR.

But a much fuller and more sustained figure is the likening of John the Baptist to the Morning Star[1] in connection with the grand simile of the Lord Jesus to the Sun; this has hitherto attracted but little attention.

There can be no difficulty in deciding when the figure of the Morning Star refers to the Baptist and when to Christ, as the simile was not applied to the Lord till many years after John had finished his heralding and had fulfilled his ministry.

### (*a*) *Scripture References.*

The employment of the figure of the Morning Star in reference to the Baptist is evident from the prophecy about John (Mal. iii. 1): "My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me," because the same figure of speech is supported by Malachi (iv. 2), where Christ is spoken of as the Sun of

[1] See *John the Baptist*, pp. 7, 75, etc., Rev. F. B. Meyer, B.A.

righteousness, who shall arise with healing in His wings; that this *is* the association of ideas is proved by the reference which Zacharias (Luke i. 76) made to these two passages in the Old Testament at the circumcision of his son the Baptist, when he said of him, "thou shalt go before the face of the Lord," and when (two verses later on) he likened the coming Christ to "the Dayspring (Sunrising) from on high" which shall visit us.

This same passage from Malachi with reference to the Baptist was also quoted by the evangelist Mark (i. 2), by the angel before John's birth (Luke i. 17), by John the Baptist himself (John iii. 28), by Christ during His ministry (Matt. xi. 10; Luke vii. 27), and by the Apostle Paul at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 24).

These quotations are the more remarkable because they were made at considerable intervals of time from each other; Christ used the words some thirty-five years after the angel had spoken them, when he announced that the Baptist would be born; and the Apostle Paul referred to the same passage in Malachi some fourteen years after Christ had uttered them.

The evangelist John wrote of the Baptist: "The

same came for witness, that he might bear witness of the Light, that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but came that he might bear witness of the Light" (John i. 7, 8).[1] *The* light *par excellence* is the Sun, and the Morning Star, which reflects its light, is not the light itself, but is a witness of the coming great luminary.

It is frequently recorded that John the Baptist stated that Christ would come "after me" (Matt. iii. 11; Mark i. 7; Luke iii. 16 (inferentially); John i. 15, 27, 30; Acts xiii. 25, xix. 4)—a statement in perfect harmony with the comparison of himself to the Morning Star.

### (*b*) *Three Memorable Occasions when John preceded Christ.*

On three memorable occasions did the Baptist precede and also testify to the Lord, *viz.*, some months before his birth (Luke i. 41, 44); shortly before His Ministry (Matt. iii. 11; John i. 26, 27); and by his violent death about a year before the crucifixion of the Lord (Matt. xiv. 10); as when

[1] On this passage the Rev. F. B. Meyer writes in *Life and Light of Men*, p. 42: "He (the Baptist) knew that he was *not* the Light, but sent to bear witness of it, *not* the Sun, but the Star that announces the dawn, and wanes in the growing light".

Christ alluded to it He said, "Even so shall the Son of man also suffer" (Matt. xvii. 12, 13).

The figure of the Baptist as the Morning Star is thus a most suitable one.

Let us investigate what conclusion may be drawn from the use of this simile in the Gospels; strange as it may seem at first sight, we shall find in the next chapter that we are furnished with inferences which definitely point to the date A.D. 29 as the year of the crucifixion of the Lord.

## NOTE.

*Explanation of the Movements of the Morning Star.*

It is somewhat strange that, in this twentieth century, many people of education and intelligence are quite ignorant of the elements of astronomy, and they do not take the trouble to notice the simplest apparent movements of the stars and planets. Should there be such an one among the readers of this book, let him not say, "I know nothing about astronomy, and therefore I will leave the subject of this book alone," because the astronomy alluded to in the Scriptures in this connection can be easily understood by any one who will read the next couple of pages; when the Bible alludes to the facts of nature, it refers to appearances well known and understood by all ordinary persons who see them.

Though doubtless very few English readers of this book observe the sky before dawn, and see the Morning Star as the Hebrews did of old, yet all must have often noticed,

at times, a bright Star, the planet Venus, near the Sunset shining continuously and very brightly for months together; for a considerable time it is the brightest object in the heavens next to the Sun and Moon, and so it claims attention; then it gets nearer and nearer to the Sun and decreases in brightness, until it is no longer to be seen, being lost in the brightness of the Sunset. Other Stars (including Planets in the term Stars) may be seen near the Sunset for a short period, but none for so long or shining so brightly as *the* Evening Star.

All the appearances of the Evening Star are repeated in reverse order when Venus becomes the Morning Star; about a fortnight or three weeks after the disappearance of the former, the Morning Star is to be seen in the East rising a very little before the Sun, and only just discernible in the brightness of the morn; but as the days go on, it increases rapidly in brilliancy, and rises earlier and earlier, quite in the dark; until about three or four months from the time it was first seen, the rising of the Morning Star precedes the rising of the Sun by some three hours; by that time the former has paled considerably in brightness. As the weeks and months go on, it still continues shining, but with diminished brilliancy and giving shorter and shorter announcement of daybreak, until it is only to be seen shining feebly in the glowing dawn; and at last, after having appeared continuously for about nine months in the Eastern sky, it is lost to view in the brightness of the rays of the rising Sun; and it is not again visible in the East for some eleven months.

After a few weeks, however, the planet reappears as the Evening Star, and again begins its period of shining in the Western sky near the sunset, at first almost unnoticed, but after several weeks attracting universal attention by its

great brilliancy at a considerable distance from the Sun, and then again it approaches the great luminary and fades away in the Sunset as before, having shone continuously, like the Morning Star, for about nine months. The Morning Star then reappears after a fortnight or three weeks, and so the cycle continues.

The intervals between visibility are slightly longer in England than in the lower latitude and clearer atmosphere of Palestine to which the foregoing remarks apply.

The conditions of visibility also vary according as Venus is North or South of the Sun, being much more favourable when it is North; but for our purposes we may regard the figures which we have given as good working averages, quite sufficiently accurate for our purpose.

These appearances and movements were perfectly familiar to the ancient Hebrews, as they still are to modern Easterns, many of whom are quite illiterate; but this knowledge of the Morning Star was forced upon them as they rose very early, and they needed an indication of the coming of the dawn, as they had no clocks. In the comparatively cloudless Eastern skies, the rising of the Morning Star is generally to be seen.

Very many ages ago it was thought that the Morning and Evening Stars were different objects, but as it was noticed that the one never appeared till the other had ceased shining, it was found out several thousand years ago that both are the same celestial object, to which the Babylonians gave the name of Ištar, and which we call the planet Venus.

As it is never seen far away from the Sun, rising early in the summer when the Sun rises early, and rising later in the winter when the Sun rises later, the Babylonians said that Ištar accompanied her husband the Sun to the

under-world in the winter, and rose with him at the following spring.

The movements of the planet which we have noticed, its alterations in brilliancy and the crescent form which it is seen at times to assume in the telescope, cause us to understand that the planet Venus revolves round the Sun at a distance from it less than that of the Earth.

# THE MORNING STAR.

Now the bright Morning Star, day's harbinger,
Comes dancing from the East.
—"Song on May Morning."—*J. Milton.*

I woke, and the night was passing,
And over the hills there shone
A Star all alone in its beauty,
When the other stars were gone.

For a glory was filling the heavens
That came before the day,
And the gloom and the stars together
Faded and passed away.

Only the Star of the Morning
Glowed in the crimson sky—
It was like a clear voice singing
"Rejoice! for the Sun is nigh."
—From "Hymns of Ter Steegen and others, Second Series".—*Trans. by Mrs. Bevan.*

# CHAPTER II.

## THE MORNING STAR IN THE GOSPELS.

(A) RICHNESS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE IN METAPHOR.

(B) METHOD IN SCRIPTURE METAPHORS, REFERENCE TO THINGS PRESENT.

(C) THE SIMILE OF THE BAPTIST TO THE MORNING STAR WAS PROBABLY EMPLOYED WHEN THE PLANET WAS SHINING AT THE END OF EACH NIGHT.

(D) EXPLANATION OF FIG. IV. (at the end of the book), containing the Eight Years' Cycle of the Morning Star.

(E) SCRIPTURE REFERENCES TO THE BAPTIST AS THE MORNING STAR.

- (*a*) *Beginning of John's Ministry.*
- (*b*) *Beginning of Christ's Ministry.*
- (*c*) "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*"
- (*d*) *Imprisonment of John.*
- (*e*) "*He was the lamp that burneth.*"
- (*f*) "*My Messenger before Thy face.*"
- (*g*) *Death of John.*
- (*h*) "*The Light of the World.*"
- (*i*) *Old Questions.*
- (*j*) *Visit to Bethabara.*
- (*k*) *The Crucifixion.*

(F) CONCLUSION THAT A.D. 29 WAS THE YEAR OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

## (A) RICHNESS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE IN METAPHOR.

It must be remembered that the languages of the Bible are comparable to a tool used by the Divine Author; these languages are foreign ones to us, and a mere literal translation cannot always give the full meaning.

Max Müller says: "When first we begin to learn a new language it seems easy . . . but the more we learn it, the more difficult do we find it to discover words which will really square with our own words".

Those who have resided in any land where the language is foreign to them, will readily acknowledge that a mastery of that language is not complete without a comprehension of the character of the people, of their attitude of mind, and of the special meanings which they attach to various sentences and phrases—meanings which are sometimes very different from the literal translation of the words into another tongue.

The difficulty of translation is great in all cases, but it is greater in translating from Eastern to Western languages, because the methods of ex-

pression in the former are so much richer in metaphor and figure; of all Eastern languages Hebrew excels in this characteristic. The strict monotheism of the Israelites discouraged the arts of the sculptor and of the artist, which flourished among the Egyptians, Babylonians and Greeks; there can be no doubt that the Hebrews possessed the artistic feeling, but the expression of it was chiefly confined to the use made of language; hence we find word-pictures, poetic images, metaphors and illustrations employed very freely in Scripture, and to an extent far beyond our experience in Latin or Greek outside the New Testament. A play upon words is not unfrequently employed to fix attention, enigmatical utterances occur, and at times statements are purposely made in a manner difficult to comprehend, as for instance in the case of the number of the beast (Rev. xiii. 18).

As the Scriptures are written for all nations and for all times, the main essential truths are plainly put forward, but when we seek for the full force of some of its sentences we thankfully accept the help afforded by careful scholarship and study.

## (B) METHOD IN SCRIPTURE METAPHORS, REFERENCE TO THINGS PRESENT.

We may notice a probable method in the employment of metaphor in Scripture. Sir Isaac Newton[1] drew attention to a special feature in the Bible—that figurative language was very generally employed, while the circumstances to which the figure referred were actually occurring. He says: "I observe that Christ and His forerunner John in their parabolic discourses were wont to allude to things present. The old prophets, when they would describe things emphatically, did not only draw parables from things which offered themselves, as from the rent of a garment (1 Sam. xv. 27, 28) . . . from the vessels of a potter (Jer. xviii. 3-6) . . . but also when such fit objects were wanting, they supplied them by their own actions, as by rending a garment (1 Kings xi. 30, 31); by shooting (2 Kings xiii. 17-19), etc. . . . By such types the prophets loved to speak. And Christ, being endued with a nobler prophetic spirit than the rest, excelled also in this kind of speaking, yet so as not to speak by His

[1] *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel*, note on p. 148.

own actions—that were less grave and decent—but to turn into parables such things as offered themselves. On occasion of the harvest approaching He admonishes His disciples once and again of the spiritual harvest (John iv. 35; Matt. ix. 37). Seeing the lilies of the field, He admonishes His disciples about gay clothing (Matt. vi. 28). In allusion to the present season of fruits, He admonishes His disciples about knowing men by their fruits. In the time of the Passover, when trees put forth their leaves, He bids His disciples 'learn a parable from the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh' (Matt. xxiv. 32; Luke xxi. 29, 30)."

We may add to Sir Isaac Newton's list the following, which relate to events taking place at known seasons of the year:—

| Texts. | Approximate Month. | Remarks. |
|---|---|---|
| (*a*) "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard" (Matt. xx. 1). | January.[1] | At the time when this parable was spoken Christ had departed beyond Jordan (Matt. xix. 1; John x. 40). From the latter passage we learn it was just after the Feast of Dedication (John x. 22) (early December). Before the following Passover (March) there was the visit to Bethabara (John i. 28, x. 40), and also a time of tarrying at Ephraim (John xi. 54). Hence we gather that this parable was uttered nearer to the time of the Feast of Dedication than to the Passover, say in January. |
| (*b*) "Lambs in the midst of wolves" (Luke x. 3). | February or beginning of March. | Before sending out the seventy (Luke x. 1). In order to allow time for their mission and return (Luke x. 17), this utterance was probably a few weeks before the last Passover, about the lambing season (see (*g*) below). |
| (*c*) "Son, go work to-day in the vineyard" (Matt. xxi. 28).<br><br>(*d*) "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He taketh it away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit" (John xv. 2). | Middle of March.[1] | Just before the last Passover. A pruning of vines took place at this season. "Afore the harvest, when the blossom is over, and the flower becometh a ripening grape, he shall cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks, and the spreading branches shall he take away and cut down" (Isa. xviii. 5). |

[1] "For tilling the ground and keeping it free from weeds in winter a hired labourer would be sufficient, but for cutting off the rapidly growing shoots in March or later, so as to prevent the energy of the plant being directed to mere vegetative development, an intelligent workman would be needed," writes W. Carruthers, F.R.S.

How interesting to note that the similes to unskilled labourers and to the responsible owner and his sons as workers, are made at the appropriate time of year in each case!

| Texts. | Approximate Month. | Remarks. |
|---|---|---|
| (*e*) "Every plant which My heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Matt. xv. 13). | End of March or beginning of April. | Just after feeding the 5,000 (Matt. xiv. 14-21), which was about Passover (John vi. 4-13). Tares were separated at harvest (Matt. xiii. 30), which was shortly to come. |
| (*f*) "Let the children first be filled" (Mark vii. 27). | April. | Christ might have said: "Let the children first be cured or blessed"; but as it was a time of shortness of bread just after Passover (Mark vi. 35-40; John vi. 4-13), and consequently shortly before harvest, when the supplies of corn from last year's harvest were running short, Christ appropriately spoke of the Syro-Phœnician woman's wants under the figure of hunger. |
| (*g*) "Sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. x. 16). | May. | Harvest time (Matt. ix. 37, xii. 1). The young sheep by this time would no longer be considered *lambs* (see (*b*) above). |
| (*h*) "I am the Light of the world" (John viii. 12). | September. | Reference to lamps at the Feast of Tabernacles (John vii. 2). See *The Temple: its Ministry*, etc., A. Edersheim. |
| (*i*) "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. . . . I am the door of the sheep" (John x. 2, 7). | November. | After the Feast of Tabernacles (John vii. 2), and before the Feast of Dedication, which was winter (John x. 22) (early December), a time of year when sheep were folded every night. |

(C) THE SIMILE OF THE BAPTIST TO THE MORNING STAR WAS PROBABLY EMPLOYED WHEN THE PLANET WAS SHINING AT THE END OF EACH NIGHT.

Hence we see that allusions were frequently made to things actually present. Consequently, if we find other allusions, such, for instance, as the comparison of the Baptist to the shining of the Morning Star, we may reasonably conclude that the planet was then to be seen in the early morning before sunrise. If this is so, we shall find an indication of the dates of the ministries of Christ and of John, and consequently of the crucifixion.

(D) EXPLANATION OF FIG. IV. (at the end of the book), containing the Eight Years' Cycle of the Morning Star.

Mr. Wickham, F.R.A.S., 1st Assistant, Radcliffe Observatory, Oxford, and Mr. Crommelin, F.R.A.S., Assistant Observer, Royal Observatory, Greenwich, have calculated data about Venus as the Morning Star, A.D. 23-36—a period which covers all possible limits for the beginning and ending of Christ's ministry. Fig. IV. (at the end of the book) has

been constructed from these data; in it, the periods when the planet was the Morning Star, rising an hour or more before daybreak, are indicated by heavy shadings on the *right* of the central line; the inclined terminals of the heavy shadings indicate a heralding of less than an hour. To complete the diagram the periods when the planet was the Evening Star, setting an hour or more *after* the sun, are indicated by corresponding dotted lines on the *left* of the same central straight line. The short horizontal cross lines indicate the solstices, the asterisks on the straight line the equinoxes, and the bracket the period of the Lord's ministry.

On reference to the diagram we learn that the Morning Star shines continuously on the average for about seven and a half lunar months at the end of each night, giving at least an hour's notice of sunrise; but if we include the period when it is still visible, but gives shorter notice, the time of shining may be lengthened to about nine lunar months.

An eight years' cycle, containing five periods of the shining of the Morning Star—useful for practical purposes—exists between the apparent

movements of the Sun and Venus, correct to within a little over two days. For instance, it will be noticed (see Fig. IV.) that the Morning Star began to shine at about the vernal equinox, A.D. 25, and eight years afterwards, *viz.*, in A.D. 33, it again began its period of shining at the same season of the year; and so, generally, at all years, separated from each other by eight years, the shinings of the Morning Star were during the same months.

Hence the use of the numerals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, opposite the periods of shining of the Morning Star in the diagram, to draw attention to those which occurred in the same months.

Our diagram also gives the probable dates of various events and utterances connected with the Baptist, when he is referred to under the figure of the Morning Star. The arrangement enables us to see at a glance whether the planet was shining at the end of the night on each of the times under consideration.

We shall at present assume the ministry of the Lord to have lasted between three and four years, and leave the consideration of a shorter period to p. 210, chapter vi.

It is very generally admitted from the historical data available that the crucifixion took place between the years A.D. 28-33; the three and a half years' Ministry must therefore have begun in one of the years A.D. 24-29.

## (E) SCRIPTURE REFERENCES TO THE BAPTIST AS THE MORNING STAR.

We now proceed to examine passages in the Gospels referring to the Baptist as the Morning Star in more detail (see Fig. IV.).

### (*a*) *Beginning of John's Ministry.*

At the very beginning of his ministry, the Baptist referred to the prophecy in Malachi iii. 1, in which he was likened to the Morning Star, when he said, "He that cometh after me is mightier than I" (Mat. iii. 11; Mark i. 7, see also Luke iii. 16; Acts xiii. 25). According to the principle we are adopting, that figures are taken from things actually present, the Morning Star would be shining when the Baptist began his ministry, and thus the witness in the sky and the human messenger each gave a prolonged heralding of the One who was to come.

If we refer to Matthew iii. 8, 10, 12, we find the

Baptist using three figures of speech at the beginning of his ministry.

(1) "Now is the axe laid unto the root of the trees." Presumably marking the unfruitful trees for cutting down (see Matt. vii. 19).

(2) "Every tree . . . that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down."

(3) "Whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly cleanse His threshing floor: and He will gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire."

These three figures all refer to the time of harvest, which would have taken place within the month after the Passover, as the place where John began his ministry was the deep depression "round about Jordan" (Luke iii. 3), where the harvest is far earlier than on the Judæan hills.

If we refer to Fig. IV. we see that the Morning Star was shining during the month after the Passover (April or May) only in the years A.D. 24, 25 and 27 in the period A.D. 24-29. Hence we conclude that John began his ministry on one of these three years.

(*b*) *Beginning of Christ's Ministry.*

John again bare a similar witness just before the beginning of the Lord's ministry and cried, saying: "This was He of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me" (John i. 15), repeating the phrase on the morrow (John i. 30) —again bearing out the simile of the Morning Star and the rising Sun.

At what time of year was this? It was, of course, a good deal later than the beginning of John's own ministry, probably at least four or five months, to allow time for the Baptist to be known and to attract great public attention.

It could not therefore have been earlier than the latter part of August; it must also have been long before the following Passover, for several events in the Lord's ministry occurred before that date. Further, Christ most likely began His public ministry, which we may date from the marriage in Cana of Galilee, before November,[1] because there would have been leaves on the fig tree when

[1] The limits August to November for the beginning of Christ's ministry are sufficient for our present purpose; on p. 218 we shall adduce reasons to show that He most probably commenced His public career at the Feast of Tabernacles, about the autumnal equinox.

Nathaniel came from under it (John i. 47, 48). Christ called him with approval "an Israelite indeed," one prevailing indeed in prayer (Gen. xxxii. 28);[1] we therefore judge that, unlike the hypocrites who love to pray so as to be seen of man (Matt. vi. 5), Nathaniel had carefully hidden himself[2] for quiet prayer under cover of his fig tree, and he was consequently greatly surprised that he had been seen there by Christ.

> We may notice that the state of the vegetation of fig trees was used in Scripture as an indication of the season of the year, because in Matthew xxiv. 32 we are told that when the branch of the fig tree "is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh"; in the Song of Solomon (ii. 13), the time when "the fig tree ripeneth her green figs" is alluded to; and the fading of the leaf of the fig tree is mentioned in Isaiah xxxiv. 4.

Consequently our choice of years for the beginning of the two ministries is again narrowed,

[1] *Sermon*, Pastor Fuller Gooch. See also note on this verse (John i. 47), Dr. Weymouth's trans. N.T.: "The Jacob Nature! An apparent reference to Jacob's change of name and character (Gen. xxxii. 28)".

[2] At the beginning of the Old Testament Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden (Gen. iii. 8); at the beginning of the New Testament Nathaniel was under the fig tree to be free from the observation of man.

and we must reject A.D. 24, for the Morning Star was certainly not shining in the months August to November of that year; A.D. 27 may fulfil this condition, if we suppose that Christ began His ministry within a month or six weeks from the time of John's first appearance—which of course is not at all likely, but we shall find it definitely cast out a little later on (see (*g*), p. 78).

There remains only A.D. 25, which, however, answers admirably, and we therefore assume this year as the beginning of Christ's ministry. We shall find this assumption confirmed by further inferences as we proceed.

### (*c*) "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*"

The next reference to the Baptist under the figure we are considering is "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John iii. 30), a sentence expressed in the contrasted couplet form of expression so common among Hebrew writers (*e.g.* Prov. x. 1, xi. 5, xii. 2, 7, 8). These words may have foreshadowed John's imprisonment; they were uttered after the first Passover, which took place, according to the assumption we have just made, in A.D. 26, but before the Baptist was cast into

prison, see p. 65 (John iii. 24); we may consequently assume that John spoke them about the beginning or middle of April. The figure may allude to:—

(1) The increasing power of the Sun as the days lengthen and the heat becomes greater between midwinter and midsummer, the increase of both combined being most rapid shortly after the equinox; and the decreasing of the Morning Star may refer to its non-appearance in the sky at the end of each night, and to the planet moving farther and farther away from its position as Morning Star, and increasing its angular distance on the other side of the Sun as the Evening Star. In the year A.D. 26 it did this till shortly before midsummer.

(2) Or the simile may refer to the daily appearance when the Morning Star is shining, when the increasing brilliancy of the rising Sun causes the light of its herald to decrease and fade away, as was suggested by Mimpriss.[1]

Which of these allusions is more probable? The seeming destruction of the non-setting stars caused by the rising of the Sun was an ancient figure of

[1] *Mimpriss' Gospel Treasury*, section xii., p. 132, on John iii. 30.

speech, which was generally employed to typify the triumph over the powers of darkness and evil, and it is probably used in 2 Thessalonians ii. 8: "The lawless one, whom the Lord . . . shall bring to nought by the manifestation (forth-shining, Gk.) of His coming". We thus see that the figure of the rising Sun extinguishing the light of the stars is associated with conflict, punishment and judgment, which certainly did not represent the relationship between Christ and His forerunner John. Hence we conclude that the explanation of the figure suggested by Mimpriss, (2), is not a probable one. But no objection can be brought against the other, (1). Our diagram tells us that the first, and more probable, of the two explanations is fulfilled in the circumstance under consideration.

### (*d*) *Imprisonment of John.*

The imprisonment of John took place soon after the last utterance.

For Canon Sanday[1] thinks, the events of John ii. 13-iv. 45 did not occupy more than three or four weeks, because when the Lord arrived in Galilee (see Matt. iv. 12) the impression of His public acts at Jeru-

[1] *Outlines from the Life of Christ*, p. 49, Rev. Professor W. Sanday, D.D.

salem was still fresh (John iv. 45).[1] The estimate that the imprisonment of the Baptist took place very soon after the Passover and before the harvest A.D. 26 (John iv. 35) is somewhat strengthened by the fact that the Synoptic Gospels record no events after Christ's Baptism and before John was delivered up, except the Temptation (Matt. iv. 12; Mark i. 14; see also Luke iv. 14); and because the Apostle Paul said that "as John was fulfilling his course ('towards the end of his career,' *W. T.*), he said, What suppose ye that I am? I am not He. But behold there cometh One after me, the shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to unloose" (Acts xiii. 25). These words tend to place the end of John's career as early as is allowable, because the message referred to was uttered by the Baptist when he announced Christ in the autumn of A.D. 25 (John i. 26, 27).

We therefore estimate that John was imprisoned about the middle or end of April, A.D. 26, when we see from Fig. IV. that the Morning Star appropriately was not shining.

### (*e*) "*He was the Lamp that Burneth.*"

The next reference to the Baptist under this simile is a very striking one. Christ speaks of him as "the lamp that burneth and shineth; and ye were willing to rejoice for a season in his light"

[1] This would lead us to explain the ambiguous latter half of John iv. 35, the description of "the fields . . . white already unto harvest," as actually existing, and "Say not ye," etc., as a proverb.

(John v. 35). The definite article is twice used in the Greek of this passage, and it therefore seems to indicate some particular light. Though he was in prison, Christ said of him at this time, "You sent to John, and he both was and still is a witness to the truth" (John v. 33, *W. T.*). A name for the planet Venus as "lamp" or "light" was used in Sanscrit, and also in Arabic. In the ancient *Chinese book of Odes*[1] written several centuries B.C. the Morning Star is alluded to as *the bright Star*, and the planet Venus is still called by that name in China. Long before he had any thought that this passage of Scripture refers to the Morning Star, the author of this book described the setting of the Evening Star at sea (it is just similar in appearance to the Morning Star rising) as resembling a lighthouse near at hand.[2] In Scripture the translation of "helel" (Isa. xiv. 12, A.V.) is Lucifer, which means "light bearer," indicating the Morning Star, and the modern Italians call it *Lucifero.* (Compare Isa. lxii. 1, where "the brightness" and "a lamp that

[1] *Translation* by the Rev. G. Owen, L.M.S., Pekin.

[2] *Proceedings, Royal Artillery Institution,* "The Transit of Venus," 1882, vol. xii., No. 7.

burneth" may possibly refer to the Sun and to the Morning Star respectively.)

Regarding the phrase "to rejoice for a season in his light," it is a custom, still sometimes observed in Egypt, India and Palestine, for travellers by night—and night travelling is usual in hot climates—to sing songs[1] on the rising of the Morning Star, because it announces that the darkness and dangers of the night are coming to an end. An astronomical friend who had never heard of this custom, could not understand how any one could possibly rejoice in the light of Venus; the abundance of his instruments and clocks had prevented him from realising the use which Easterns still make of the planet to foretell day; probably many astronomers would have spoken in the same way—an instance of the difference of the standpoints of East and West.

The argument used by our Lord in the passage under consideration seems to be—you were willing to rejoice in the light of the herald of day, which only shines by reflecting the light of the coming

[1] According to *letters* received from Dr. Harpur, C.M.S., Egypt, Moulvie Mahomed Nizamuddin, B.A., Prime Minister, Bhopal, and Mr. Forder of Jerusalem.

Sun, much more should you rejoice when the Sun itself has actually risen, when "the Light of the World" has actually come. This interpretation harmonises with His statement just afterwards (John v. 39) that "ye search the Scriptures . . . which bear witness of Me," the inference again being—now that I am come, you ought to receive Me. All through the conversation the subject is that of witness-bearing—by His own works, by the Father, by John, by the Scriptures, and by Moses; the whole pointing to the necessity of receiving the One to whom such abundant witness had been borne.

The time of this utterance was just after the unnamed feast of John v. 1 and before the Passover of John vi. 4. If, as is often assumed, the unnamed feast were Passover, Fig. IV. tells us that the Morning Star was appropriately shining (A.D. 27), as would also have been the case had it been Purim (February) or the feast of weeks at the beginning of June.

### (*f*) "*My Messenger before Thy Face.*"

These words, comparing the Baptist to the Morning Star, were quoted by Christ from Mal. iii. 1, when the prisoner had sent some of his disciples to ask Him, "Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" (Matt. xi. 3).

Was the Baptist faithful or not in sending his

disciples to Christ to ask this question? The casual reader may think that a dispirited man had given way to despondency, and that he who had been a bold witness to the Lord was now on the point of becoming faithless and unbelieving.

But a little investigation shows us that he was undoubtedly right and true in acting as he did.

Let us consider John's general character. His was a rare combination of unswerving boldness before men with deep humility before Christ. He boldly denounced sinners (Matt. iii. 7), and did not hesitate to rebuke King Herod himself (Matt. xiv. 4). Yet his delight was to magnify Christ (John i. 29) and to speak of himself in the humblest terms, when he said, "I am not worthy to unloose" the latchet of my Master's shoe (John i. 27), and "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John iii. 30).

If, for the moment, we exclude the consideration of this question, we find that John the Baptist, who stood alone, was invariably faithful; while Christ's disciples, who had the benefit of His presence, often failed. The reason appears to be that the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb" (Luke i. 15).

What was his general reputation? In the minds of the people he was closely associated with his Master, as some thought that Christ was John the Baptist (Matt. xvi. 14), and Herod previously had supposed the same, thinking that his murdered prisoner had come to life again (Matt. xiv. 2). Christ's disciples had a high opinion of the Baptist, for they entreated their Master to teach them to pray as John had taught his disciples (Luke xi. 1). On several other occasions Christ made honourable mention of John and of his work, as for instance when He spoke of his witnessing as "the lamp that burneth and shineth" (John v. 35), and again when He appealed to the baptism of John and asked the chief priests and elders of the people whether it was from heaven (Matt. xxi. 25). After John's death, Christ went "to the place where John was at the first baptising . . . and many believed on Him there" (John x. 40-42). And after His resurrection He again referred to John's baptism (Acts i. 5).

Evidently we must not impute unworthy motives to such a man, when he sent to ask his question, unless the evidence against him is clear and unmistakable.

But when we turn to John's disciples we do not find such nobility of character. They were not above petty jealousy, as was shown by their words to their teacher: "Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to Whom thou hast borne witness, behold, the same baptiseth, and all men come to Him" (John iii. 26).

John replied to them in the humblest way about himself and spoke in the most faithful way of Christ, but presumably he did not convince his followers.

When he was thrown into prison they were naturally much cast down, and they may well have doubted that Jesus really was Christ, as He did not liberate His faithful forerunner. They may have doubted His power or His will.

*They* fasted as had been their habit, but even then Christ's disciples fasted not; so they came to Him in their perplexity to ask the reason (Matt. ix. 14), but it is doubtful if their difficulties were cleared away.

John *waited* until his disciples brought him reports that Christ was performing most wonderful cures, even raising the dead (Matt. ix. 18-25; Luke vii. 11-17); and *then* he sent to ask his question

with a view, as we believe, to confirm the faith of his own followers.

Why did John send at this particular time? Why did he, who "did no sign" (John x. 41), choose this occasion when Christ was performing His greatest miracles?

We have already seen how very familiar John must have been with the Book of Malachi from his earliest childhood, as the angel before his birth and his father just afterwards had declared that he was spoken of in it. In the same book the Sun of righteousness is spoken of as rising **with healing** in His wings (Mal. iv. 2). There can be no doubt that John's disciples were also familiar with the writings of Malachi. Consequently it was a most appropriate time to send to Christ.

In the wording of his question John consistently adhered to his rôle of forerunner in accordance with the prophecy of Malachi, when he asked, "Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" (Matt. xi. 3); he did not ask if Christ were the King of the Jews, the title applied to Him by the Magi, nor did he use any of the other names applied to Him by the prophets of old.

Christ replied, as we suppose that John expected

that He would, by drawing attention to His wonderful miracles of curing (Matt. xi. 4, 5), thus fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi iv. 2. This reference may not be apparent to us at first; but if we can imagine ourselves in the position of John and of his disciples the reference will be quite obvious.

When Christ added the words, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me" (Matt. xi. 6), He probably referred to those who had resisted the popular tendency to be offended at Christ, for some had said that the ascetic John and the One who was the Friend of publicans and sinners could not both be right (Matt. xi. 18, 19). Other causes of offence afterwards arose; those in His own country would not receive Him, because they said He was only the carpenter's Son (Matt. xiii. 54-58), and the Pharisees were offended at Him because He denounced them as hypocrites (Matt. xv. 12). We have seen also that John's disciples were stumbled. The blessing pronounced on those who do not find any occasion of stumbling in Christ is of universal application. There does not appear to be any ground for supposing that it conveyed any indirect reproof to John or suggested that he was

in a state of perplexity. The Baptist's conduct on the present occasion seems to have been prompted by the desire to remove the cause of stumbling from the minds of others.

After John's disciples had gone, Christ spoke with the utmost approval of His forerunner, and He graciously confirmed the statement of the angel and of Zacharias that John fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi iii. 1, "My messenger . . . before Me". It is a very high honour for any man to be foretold in prophecy; but for Christ Himself to say that the prophecy applied to that man is an honour indeed, unique and unparalleled; thus even though he was a prisoner, Christ stated that His faithful servant was bearing a bright witness.

Some report of his Master's words of high commendation must have reached the captive. We can well understand how they must have solaced him in the following months of his dreary imprisonment, which was only to end with a cruel death; and how cheerfully he must have "despised the shame" in view of the high praise given him by his Lord.

Christ also added that "among them that are born of women there is none greater than John"

(Luke vii. 28). The people who heard these words fully understood the praise given, for we read that "they . . . justified God, being baptised with the baptism of John" (Luke vii. 29).

Christ, however, loaded the Baptist with further honours in this short discourse; again did He allude to Malachi's reference to John, this time under the figure of Elias (compare Mal. iv. 5, 6, with Matt. xi. 14; see also Matt. xvii. 12, 13; Luke i. 17), and He concluded the subject by graciously classing together the opposite characteristics of Himself and of John, declaring that "Wisdom is justified of all her children" (Luke vii. 35).

The fact that Christ selected this particular occasion to bestow these heaped-up encomiums clearly forces upon us the conviction that His herald was acting in faithful obedience, fully honouring his Divine Master, particularly as no blame whatever was given to him. The Lord never hesitated to reprove His followers in unmistakable words when they acted wrongly, as we notice for example in the case of Peter, when he had dared to rebuke his Master and when Christ said to him, "Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art a stumbling block unto Me" (Matt. xvi. 23),

and of Thomas, to whom Christ said, "Be not faithless, but believing" (John xx. 27).

On the other hand, when Christ praised He did not also blame; for instance, when He said to Peter: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 17), there was no blame at the *same* time.

We judge that on this occasion John succeeded in his plan and that his followers were convinced of Christ's divinity; because afterwards, when the much severer blow of their leader's murder fell upon them, they did the very best thing they could have done—"they went and told Jesus" (Matt. xiv. 12)—apparently quite of their own accord.

Hence we should quite expect that the Morning Star would be shining when this reference was made to John as the witness-bearer; the following chronological considerations show that this was the case.

For this quotation must have been made at harvest time because it was spoken *after* the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v., etc.), which was almost certainly at that season from its allusions to the filling of barns, to the lilies of the field, and to knowing men by their fruits (Matt. vi. 26, 28, vii. 20), and it was spoken before the

plucking of the ears of corn (Matt. xii. 1), which took place during the same Judæan harvest. On which year was the quotation made? We have deduced on p. 66 that John was cast into prison (Matt. iv. 12) about April, A.D. 26. The events of Matthew iv. 12-25, containing as they do the dwelling at Capernaum, the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John, the travelling through all Galilee, and the healing of large numbers of sick, demand several months for their accomplishment; hence we conclude that the Sermon on the Mount, the quotation from Malachi and the plucking the ears of corn all occurred at the harvest of A.D. 27. We come to the same conclusion that the plucking the ears of corn was in A.D. 27, because it was at the harvest before the death of the Baptist, which took place about Passover A.D. 28 (compare Matt. xii. 1, xiv. 10, 14-21, with John vi. 4-13).

On reference to Fig. IV. we see that the Morning Star was appropriately shining when Christ made this quotation from Malachi.

### (*g*) *Death of John.*

We see from Fig. IV. that the Morning Star was appropriately not shining at the death of the Baptist at Passover A.D. 28 (Matt. xiv. 10, 14-21; John vi. 4-13)—the last one before the crucifixion.

If we had assumed A.D. 27 (see p. 63) for the date of the beginning of the Ministry it would have involved the utterance referred to in (*e*), p. 66, and the quotation in (*f*), p. 69, being spoken in spring, A.D. 29, when the Morning Star was *not* shining; and the death of John

would have occurred in spring, A.D. 30, when the Morning Star *was* shining—all three being inharmonious; we therefore definitely cast out A.D. 27 as a possible date for the beginning of the Lord's Ministry.

### (*h*) "*The Light of the World.*"

After the death of John, and before the Crucifixion, there came another period of the shining of the Morning Star during the Lord's Ministry in the second half of A.D. 28 (see Fig. IV.). At the Feast of Tabernacles (John vii. 2), in the autumn of that year, the Lord called Himself "the Light of the World" (John viii. 12; see also ix. 5), when there can be no doubt He compared Himself to the Sun, which therefore carried on the figure of the Baptist being the Morning Star.

The Jews apparently recognised the similitude, and their minds must have gone back to John, when they addressed to the Lord at this time (John viii. 25; see also 53) the identical question they put to the Baptist some three years before, "Who art thou?" (John i. 19). On the later occasion they dared to say to the Lord, "Thou bearest witness to Thyself; Thy witness is not true" (John viii. 13), most likely because the Baptist was no longer alive to give his witness.

### (*i*) *Old Questions.*

Looking again at Fig. IV. we notice that the Morning Star was still visible in the early winter, at the beginning of December, A.D. 28, at the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple (John x. 22); at that time there were still some echoes of the old question to John, and doubtless remembrance of his witness, when the Jews said to the Lord, "How long dost Thou hold us in suspense? If Thou art the Christ, tell us plainly" (John x. 24).

### (*j*) *Visit to Bethabara.*

Though the figure of the Morning Star is not mentioned, the dead Baptist still witnessed at a time when the Herald of day was shining, just after the Feast of Dedication, when the Lord went to the place where John was at the first baptising, when the people confessed "All things whatsoever John spake of this man were true. And many believed on Him there" (John x. 41, 42). As Bishop Ellicott remarks on this passage, "the enthusiasm which John had kindled still burns".

The arrival at Bethabara was probably very soon after the Feast of Dedication, in order to allow time for Christ to abide there (John x. 40) and also to tarry at Ephraim (John xi. 54) before the approaching final Passover.

### (*k*) *The Crucifixion.*

But when we come to the last Passover in the year A.D. 29, the Herald of dawn had just disappeared. This harmonises with the following record of the complete isolation of the Lord at His crucifixion, which we reverently notice.

(1) The disappearance of the witness John by death (Matt. xiv. 10).

(2) The forsaking of Him by all His disciples (Matt. xxvi. 56; Ps. xxxviii. 11, lxix. 20).

(3) The absence of any record of a ministry of angels, as after the temptation (Matt. iv. 11).

(4) The hiding of God's face, when Christ uttered the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46; Ps. xxii. 1).

(5) In nature, the Sun's light failed (Luke xxiii. 45).

(6) Being daytime, the Paschal full Moon was, of course, below the horizon.

## (F) CONCLUSION THAT A.D. 29 WAS THE YEAR OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

We have thus seen that if we assume a three and a half years' ministry beginning autumn, A.D. 25, and consequently necessitating Passover A.D.

29 as the date for the Crucifixion, all references to the Baptist as the Morning Star harmonise with the actual shining or non-shining of the herald of dawn in the heavens; we have also shown that no other date which is historically possible will fulfil these harmonies; we have thus obtained an almost independent confirmation of the date A.D. 29 for the Crucifixion.

It must be confessed that we have not adduced strong evidence, but only inferences, which are, however, valuable, because they point to harmonies long hidden, but which were probably quite apparent to the first readers, to whom the periods of the appearance of the Morning Star must have been far more generally known than they are to us at the present time.

Some readers, on first thoughts, may be inclined to think the foregoing deductions fanciful and unreal, because they involve a train of thought with which they are unfamiliar; some may wish that it had been plainly stated in the New Testament that John the Baptist was compared to the Morning Star, which was to be shining when he was alluded to by that simile; but then the subtle delicacy of the allusions would have been lost, the modes of

expression would have approximated to our own, and the value of the special inference would have been altogether different in its nature. Reflection and a fuller acquaintance with Eastern and specially with Biblical methods of expression, in which symbolism and figures of all kinds are very freely employed, will, it is believed, prevent any thoughtful reader from hastily rejecting the conclusions which have been drawn, especially as a further use can be made of the same lines of inference in helping to discover the date of the Nativity, as is done in chapter iv. Let us be glad if we can trace some of the many harmonies which lie just under the surface in the sacred Word, which only await our investigation and recognition.

Our deduction in this chapter that the date of the Crucifixion was A.D. 29, is considerably strengthened, because the same result follows from a somewhat similar, but perhaps more obvious, line of inference, which we shall investigate in the next chapter.

# THE SABBATH YEAR.

(Heb. iv. 10.)

Erewhile I reasoned of Thy truth,
I searched with toil and care;
From morn to night I tilled my field,
And yet my field was bare.

Now, fed with corn from fields of Heaven,
The fruit of Hands Divine,
I pray no prayer, for all is given,
The Bread of God is mine.

. . . . . .

And thus my worship is delight—
My work, to see His Face,
With folded hands and silent lips
Within His Holy Place.

Thus oft to busy men I seem
A cumberer of the soil;
The dreamer of an empty dream,
While others delve and toil.

O brothers! in these silent hours
God's miracles are wrought;
He giveth His beloved in sleep
A treasure all unsought.

—From "Hymns of Ter Steegen, Suso, and others, First Series".—*Trans. by F. Bevan.*

# CHAPTER III.

## THE SABBATH[1] YEAR IN THE GOSPELS.

(A) THE SEVENTH PERIOD.

- (*a*) *The Seventh Day—the Sabbath Day.*
- (*b*) *The Seventh Year—the Sabbath Year.*
- (*c*) *The Seventh Month.*

(B) AFTER THE SEVENTH PERIOD.

- (*a*) *After the Seventh Day.*
- (*b*) *After the Seventh Week of Days.*
- (*c*) *After the Seventh Year.*
- (*d*) *After the Seventh Week of Years.*

(C) DIFFERENCE OF STANDPOINT IN AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS BETWEEN US NOW, AND THE HEBREWS OF OLD.

(D) DESCRIPTION OF THE SABBATH YEAR.

[1] This is often called the Sabbatical or Sabbatic year, but "Sabbath" in our Revised Version is applied to the *year* as well as to the *day* (Lev. xxv. 3-7), and as that word is used as an adjective in the expression "Sabbath rest" in Hebrews iv. 9, it seems best to employ the term "Sabbath year" to show the same adjectival meaning as in the term "Sabbath day". It would appear to be a needless complication to use the other adjectives which mean precisely the same as "Sabbath"; in fact it might be misleading, as most people would naturally expect that there must be some difference between the meaning of the three words.

(E) DATES OF SABBATH YEARS NEAR THE CRUCIFIXION.

(*a*) *Probability of Allusions to the Sabbath Year in the Gospels.*

(F) EXPLANATION OF FIG. V. (at the end of the book), containing the Seven Years' Cycle of the Sabbath Year.

(G) SCRIPTURE REFERENCES TO THE SABBATH YEAR A.D. 26-27.

(*a*) *Reading* (Isa. lxi. 1, 2).
(*b*) *Quotation* (Isa. ix. 1, 2, xlii. 6, 7).
(*c*) *The Lord's Prayer.*
(*d*) *Anxiety reproved.*
(*e*) "*The Harvest truly is plenteous.*"
(*f*) "*My Yoke is easy.*"
(*g*) *Plucking Ears of Corn.*
(*h*) "*Lord of the Sabbath.*"
(*i*) *Quotation* (Isa. xlii. 1-4).
(*j*) *Parables on Sowing.*
(*k*) *Feeding the Five Thousand.*
(*l*) "*Ye seek Me . . . because ye ate of the Loaves.*"
(*m*) "*Let the Children first be filled.*"
(*n*) *Feeding the Four Thousand.*
(*o*) *The Lord's Supper.*
(*p*) *General View of the Year.*

(H) NO YEAR, EXCEPT THE SECOND IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY, COULD HAVE BEEN THE SABBATH.

(I) CONCLUSION THAT A.D. 29 WAS THE YEAR OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

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## (A) THE SEVENTH PERIOD.

THE seventh day and the seventh year are each called a Sabbath—a word of great interest, since

it comes to us through Latin and Greek from the Hebrew,[1] which in its turn probably derived it from Babylonian and from the more ancient and long vanished Sumero-Accadian language;[2] its meaning is "rest".

There are several periods of seven in Scripture, two of which are called Sabbaths. They are both connected with the idea of rest; this is recognised in the New Testament when emphasis is laid upon the spiritual rest for the people of God by calling it a "Sabbath rest" (Heb. iv. 9).

### (*a*) *The Seventh Day—the Sabbath Day.*

After six days of creative work God rested in satisfaction, and He sanctified the seventh day, when He ordered that man also should rest from his daily toil and find rest of soul in communion with Him. "*Remember* the Sabbath Day" (Exod. xx. 8, 10, 11) indicates that this was no new com-

[1] *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, p. 410, Rev W. W. Skeat, M.A.

[2] *Letter*, Dr. Pinches, who writes: "Literally 'heart-rest,' *i.e.* in the heart or middle of the month, when the Moon 'rests' at the full. The Babylonian *Šabattu* or *Šapattu* (*tt* may have been pronounced as *thth*) was on the fifteenth day. The double *b* of the Hebrew form suggests a direct borrowing by the Hebrews from the Summerian *Šab-bat*." See also *Transactions*, *Victoria Institute*, vol. xxxv., p. 55, vol. xxxvii., p. 132.

mand given by Moses, but one dating from the beginning.

The Hebrew was reminded on this day that he had been a servant in the land of Egypt, from whence the Lord his God had brought him out by a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm, *therefore* he was commanded to keep the Sabbath Day; it was called a "Sabbath unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. v. 14, 15). By its observance the Hebrew acknowledged that he belonged to God who had delivered him; consequently when Christ claimed that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. xii. 8) on a Sabbath Day (which we shall see on p. 114 was also most probably in a Sabbath year) He asserted His Divine claims. The weekly rest was not to be the privilege of a few, but servants, strangers, and even cattle were to enjoy it also (Exod. xx. 10, xxiii. 12). On that day of rest the Israelites offered twelve loaves to show that the twelve tribes dedicated themselves to God (Lev. xxiv. 5-8); recognising God's ownership of them, they were intended to find the weekly Sabbath a day of delight; free from manual labours and ordinary duties they had time to worship Him and hear His Word (Isa. lviii. 13; Luke iv. 16, 17).

(*b*) *The Seventh Year—the Sabbath Year.*

As the observance of the seventh day of rest signified that *the people* of Israel belonged to God, the ordinances of the seventh year showed that *the land* was His also (Lev. xxv. 23). Just as in our own time a path which is generally used by the public is occasionally barred by the owner in order to denote that it is private property, so on every seventh year the fields of Canaan were not tilled, but were left to lie fallow in order to denote that they really belonged to the Lord.

The seventh year of leisure was a prolonged opportunity for the worship of God. It began with vast crowds of men, women and children, together with the strangers within their gates, assembling to hear the Law read by priests and Levites, when they were told they could "hear, . . . and learn to fear the Lord" their God (Deut. xxxi. 10-13). We shall, however, leave the fuller consideration of the seventh year to a later part of this chapter (see p. 100).

The observance of both Sabbaths primarily gave honour to God, but man was also benefited in each. The weekly rest was healthful to body and mind,

and the year of rest was useful to the land; if the fields had not been allowed to lie fallow at times, they would soon have become exhausted and the crops would have been miserably poor and meagre. Canaan was unlike Egypt, which is annually fertilised by the overflowings of the Nile, and the Israelites of old had not the artificial dressings of modern agriculture.

### (*c*) *The Seventh Month.*

As the Feast of Passover was held on the fourteenth day of the first month, and that of Tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Lev. xxiii. 5, 39), the latter feast began at the beginning of the seventh month after the Passover. As the Feast of Tabernacles only lasted seven days (Deut. xvi. 15) (followed by a closing festival on the eighth day, Num. xxix. 35), it does not quite keep up the parallel with the two Sabbaths, as in order to do that fully it should have lasted a month. The idea of rest is, however, connected with this feast, for we read "on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest" (Lev. xxiii. 39).

But here a new idea is unfolded. Although

this is the feast of the *seventh* month, the special day of rest is not the seventh, as in the Sabbath days and years, but the *first* and the *eighth* are specially selected for that purpose. In Scripture the number *seven* is essentially typical of completeness, therefore when an *eighth* period is mentioned, a new beginning is indicated.

Thus although this feast of the seventh month is the closing one of the great triad, when we come to look at the details we find indications that the days of *beginnings* are specially blessed.

This feast thus seems to link together the thankful close of one system, and it hints at the glad beginning of a new plan. It looks backward thankfully and rejoices (Deut. xvi. 15), at the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, and celebrates the deliverance from Egyptian bondage (1 Kings viii. 2, 16, 21, 51, 53; 2 Chron. vii. 22; Neh. viii. 14, ix. 9, 10, 18). It also gives a bright glimpse of future possibilities of blessing, because the day *after* the seven days of the feast was to be solemnly observed.

### (B) AFTER THE SEVENTH PERIOD.

The foregoing observances chiefly pointed to the Hebrew relationships of the first covenant; the

four which follow are likewise connected with the Hebrew law, but they also contain strong intimations of something to come—of a new beginning, when the first (Hebrew) covenant would have been completed and fulfilled; and hence we find certainly two (and perhaps three) of these observances distinctly coinciding with leading events in the new (Christian) covenant.

### (*a*) *After the Seventh Day.*

After the seven days had been completed which contained the Passover, *i.e.* on the following first day of the week, the sheaf of first-fruits was waved before the Lord (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11)—a type of Christ the first-fruits (1 Cor. xv. 20, 23), who rose from among the dead on the very early morning of that day. Hence Christians of the new covenant observe this day instead of the Hebrew Sabbath. We English call it Sunday, a name unfortunately connected with ancient heathen Sun-worship. Latin nations call it the Lord's Day, *e.g.* Dimanche (French); Domingo (Spanish), as also do a few in England, but perhaps the name most in accord with Scripture is that used by the Quakers or Friends, who call it *First-day* (Matt. xxviii. 1).

Various purifications and sanctifications took seven full days to carry out, and on the eighth day the higher plane was reached; or we may say a new and holier beginning was made on the first day after the seven had been completed.

The following took place on the *eighth* day:—

(1) Circumcision (Lev. xii. 3; Luke i. 59, ii. 21; Acts vii. 8; Phil. iii. 5).

(2) The young animals for sacrifice were given to the Lord (Exod. xxii. 30; Lev. xxii. 27).

(3) Lepers were cleansed (Lev. xiv. 10, 23). An added allusion to resurrection is afforded by releasing the living bird in the open field (Lev. xiv. 7).

(4) The uncleanness of men and of women was removed (Lev. xv. 14, 29).

(5) A Nazarite, under a vow, defiled by a dead body, was cleansed (Num. vi. 10).

(6) Solemn assembly after the Feast of Tabernacles (as already noted) (Num. xxix. 35; 1 Kings viii. 66; 2 Chron. vii. 9; Neh. viii. 18).

(7) Consecration of Aaron and his sons (Lev. viii. 33, ix. 1; Exod. xxix. 35).

We may add to these:—

(*a*) *After* being astonished seven days the word of the Lord came to the prophet Ezekiel (iii. 16).

(*b*) Fasting for Saul was concluded (1 Sam. xxxi. 13; 1 Chron. x. 12).

(*c*) Job spoke *after* a silence of seven days (Job ii. 13, iii. 1).

(*d*) Naaman was cured *after* seven dippings in Jordan (2 Kings v. 14).

(*e*) Jacob gained his wife *after* seven years of service (Gen. xxix. 20, 21).

(*f*) Nebuchadnezzar recovered his reason and praised the King of Heaven *after* seven times (Dan. iv. 16, 23, 25, 34; and there are other instances).

### (*b*) *After the Seventh Week of Days.*

After seven weeks had been completed, counting from the day when the first-fruits were presented (Lev. xxiii. 11, 15, 16), came the Feast of Weeks, Harvest or Pentecost on the fiftieth day; it was a time of rejoicing, and again there was remembrance of deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Deut. xvi. 11, 12). On that very day the Holy Spirit descended on the assembled believers (Acts ii. 1, 2), Christ's recent promise to them of the Father, of power from on high (Luke xxiv. 49), was fulfilled, and His spiritual body on earth sprang into existence.

(*c*) *After the Seventh Year.*

On the eighth year—the year after the Sabbath year—the Hebrews were again to begin to sow their fields (Lev. xxv. 22). Later, on p. 117, we shall show that Christ most probably took advantage of this occurrence to give His teachings of the Parables on Sowing which speak of new beginnings—of the good news proclaimed to the world; thus emphatically indicating the new Gospel dispensation.

We thus perceive that even the two Sabbaths, prominent as they were under the old dispensation, were each followed by an indication of a fresh beginning after them, for, on the first day after one of the Sabbath days of the year, the first-fruits were offered, and attention was drawn to the renewed sowing after each Sabbath year.

(*d*) *After the Seventh Week of Years.*

After seven weeks of years had been completed came the year of Jubilee, on the fiftieth year. Besides abstinence from field labour there was readjustment of property; every possession, except houses in towns, reverted to the original owner; thus wealth was equalised and the national life

returned to its normal balance; again was deliverance from Egyptian bondage remembered (Lev. xxv. 10-55). There is no record in Scripture of the observance of a Jubilee.

### (C) DIFFERENCE OF STANDPOINT IN AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS BETWEEN US NOW, AND THE HEBREWS OF OLD.

We may notice another instance of the difference of our circumstances from those of Bible times; we are not now as the Hebrews were of old an agricultural people; our corn comes to us at almost all seasons of the year from all parts of the world; we do not speak, for instance, of the time from March to September as that "from the beginning of harvest until water was poured . . . from heaven" (2 Sam. xxi. 10), or in any similar form of words suitable to our climate. Though we still speak of cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, the expression "seed-time and harvest" (Gen. viii. 22) is not one which we now frequently employ, nor do the allusions to various operations of husbandry come to us with the force with which they must have struck the first readers of the Old Testament and of the Gospels.

In common with most other nations, our agriculturalists generally only mix with those in their own villages or market towns. The Hebrew farmers, on the other hand, were constantly in touch with the great leaders of their nation, as three times every year all the men of the country were ordered to repair to Jerusalem (Deut. xvi. 16); their national life was like the blood in the human body, which is circulated by the action of the heart backwards and forwards from the extremities to the lungs, where it is purified and strengthened. As farmers formed the bulk of the Hebrew population, language connected with husbandry would attract the intelligent interest of the majority. Finally, this difference in things agricultural between ourselves at the present time, and the Hebrews of old was deeply accentuated by the very remarkable institution of the rest for the land on every seventh year, an arrangement without any parallel in our experience. It is not to be wondered at that the incidents and influence of this Sabbath year have little attracted the attention of us modern Westerns, as all the circumstances connected with it are so unfamiliar to us.

Certain deductions, however, may very reason-

ably be drawn from references made to the Sabbath year in the Gospels; these references were probably very apparent to the first readers of the New Testament; but they doubtless were soon overlooked by those who lived in the generations just afterwards, because the observance of the Sabbath year was swept away only a very short time after the Gospels were written—on the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, when the national customs of the Jews were crushed out under the iron heel of Rome.

## (D) DESCRIPTION OF THE SABBATH YEAR.

Let us proceed to consider the Scripture references to this ordinance of the Sabbath year:—

1. An abundant harvest was promised on the sixth year (Lev. xxv. 21).
2. The seventh year was a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath unto the Lord; the land was to lie fallow—no sowing, no pruning (Exod. xxiii. 11; Lev. xxv. 3-7).
3. The observance of the Sabbath year demonstrated that the land belonged to the Lord (Lev. xxv. 23).
4. The harvest which grew of itself was for the poor, the stranger and the cattle (Exod. xxiii. 11; Lev. xxv. 5-7).
5. It was "the year of release" from debts (Deut. xv. 1-3, 9).

6. It began at the Feast of Tabernacles when the law was read out (Deut. xxxi. 10-13; Neh. viii. 18).
7. Threatenings for non-observance (Lev. xxvi. 27, 33, 34, 43).
8. Threats fulfilled (2 Chron. xxxvi. 21).
9. A seventh year observed (Neh. x. 31).
10. Sowing to be resumed on the eighth year (Lev. xxv. 22).

Akin to this observance of the Sabbath year was the release of slaves at the end of six years' servitude; it may be that each served for six years; possibly, however, all were released together in the same Sabbath year (Exod. xxi. 2; Jer. xxxiv. 8, 14).

## (E) DATES OF SABBATH YEARS NEAR THE CRUCIFIXION.

There is no further direct reference to this ordinance in the Scriptures except to weeks of years in Daniel ix. 24-27 and to the observance of years in Galatians iv. 10, but it is generally concluded from the first Book of the Maccabees vi. 49, 53, that a Sabbath year was observed from the autumn of B.C. 164 to the autumn of B.C. 163, when Bethsura was occupied by Antiochus Epiphanes. It is also inferred from Josephus[1]

[1] *Antiquities*, Bk. xiv., Chap. xvi.

that Jerusalem was captured by Herod with the aid of the Romans within the year autumn B.C. 38 to autumn B.C. 37, and this is stated to have been a Sabbath year. Also Jewish tradition tells us that autumn A.D. 68 to autumn A.D. 69 was again a Sabbath year; this immediately preceded the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, and its occurrence must have prevented the storage of sufficient grain for the garrison.

These three dates of Sabbath years are from independent sources, but they agree among themselves in being, as they should, at intervals of time from each other, which are multiples of seven years; hence there is great probability that all of them are correct.

The intervening Sabbath years were also observed, for we have the testimony of the Roman historian Tacitus[1] about the Jews. Besides the observance of the weekly Sabbath he states: "they are idle on every seventh year as being pleased with a lazy life". We also read the following from Cæsar's decrees recorded by Josephus:[2] "Caius Cæsar, imperator the second time, hath

[1] *Hist.*, Bk. v., 4.

[2] *Ant.*, Bk. xiv., Chap. x., 6, *Whiston's translation.*

ordained that all the country of the Jews, excepting Joppa, do pay a tribute yearly for the city of Jerusalem, excepting the seventh, which they call the Sabbatical year, because thereon they neither receive the fruits of their trees, nor do they sow their land".

As we know the dates of three of the Sabbath years, it is, of course, easy to calculate all the intervening ones, and thus we can find that the year beginning autumn A.D. 26 was a Sabbath.[1]

This Sabbath year (in whole or in part) falls within the Lord's Ministry, if it lasted more than two years, and if the date of the Crucifixion were A.D. 29.

[1] See *Astronomy in the Old Testament*, p. 144, Professor G. Schiaparelli, who quotes Schürer, fourth edition, *Geschichte des judischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, vol. i., pp. 32-38 (*cf.* Eng. trans. of earlier edition, I., i., 41). The Jewish rabbis also came to the same conclusion, as did also Sir Isaac Newton in *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel*, note on p. 149 and p. 160, also Sir W. M. Ramsay in *St. Paul, the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, p. 192. All these authorities agree on a scale which names A.D. 26-27 a Sabbath year.

It is only fair, however, to mention that although the above appears to be generally received, it is not accepted by all; for instance Greswell, in his *Harmony of the Gospels*, vol. ii., pp. 235, 236, estimates from the same three historical data that the Sabbath year fell one year later, although he allows that the computation of the Jewish rabbis differs from his estimate by placing each Sabbath year twelve months earlier than he has done.

### (*a*) *Probability of Allusions to the Sabbath Year in the Gospels.*

This being so, we may well expect to find some allusions in the Gospels to the teaching and incidents of the Sabbath year, as it must have had a very noticeable effect indeed on an agricultural people, who had little foreign trade; there are four Gospel narratives, each of which contains most graphic touches, and they refer to events which all took place in one small country, in a short period of time.

We may consequently expect to find references to the proprietorship of the Lord, to rest from labours, and to deliverances; to hear of good news to the poor, perhaps of release to those in bonds, and to find that it was a year of exceptional opportunity for preaching. It would seem to present a fitting opportunity for Christ to manifest Himself publicly, and a claim to be Lord of the Sabbath would appropriately be made in that year. As the essential idea of the Sabbath indicates rest, it would be a fitting time to warn against anxiety and to teach lessons of repose and trust.

Turning to outward circumstances we might expect to find some reference to the paucity of the

harvest, which grew of itself on the Sabbath year; the people having no work of tillage might assemble in large numbers to hear Christ's teaching, and after the end of the year the resumption of sowing might be noticed as a matter of importance, and the special shortness of corn just before the first harvest following the year of rest might be incidentally alluded to.

We shall find that all these points *are* touched upon in the Gospel narratives with reference to the second year of Christ's Ministry. Surely the fifteen allusions we are about to consider are no mere coincidences, but their combined testimony must be allowed to have very considerable weight in pointing to the full consistency of the Gospel narratives and to the year A.D. 29 as that of the Crucifixion.

(F) EXPLANATION OF FIG. V. (at the end of the book), containing the Seven Years' Cycle of the Sabbath Year.

Fig. V. shows the Sabbath year, which began at the Feast of Tabernacles A.D. 26; the times of various events and utterances and the duration of Christ's Ministry are indicated in the same manner as in Fig. IV.

## (G) SCRIPTURE REFERENCES TO THE SABBATH YEAR A.D. 26-27.

Assuming for the present that Christ's Ministry lasted between three and four years, and leaving the consideration of a possibly shorter Ministry to chapter vi., we proceed to examine in detail texts which allude to the Sabbath year, in order to establish the references to it which we have just indicated, and find

### (*a*) *Reading* (Isa. lxi. 1, 2).

The reading of Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, by the Lord, recorded in Luke iv. 18, 19, at the Nazareth synagogue, is in the following words:—

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
> Because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor:
> He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,
> And recovering of sight to the blind,
> To set at liberty them that are bruised,
> To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

He then closed the book and did *not* read the words which followed in Isaiah about "the day of vengeance of our God". They were not suitable to the occasion.

Christ had proclaimed Himself as Messiah to the woman by the well of Sychar in Samaria and

many believed on Him there (John iv. 26, 39, 42), and He had performed several miracles (John ii. 23), to show forth His glory, since John had witnessed of Him by the shores of Jordan, but He chose Nazareth—the place where for a generation He had absolutely fulfilled God's standard of Love, where every inhabitant had watched Him, and could not but acknowledge that He always "pleased God"—He chose Nazareth as the place where He first publicly asserted His claims to be the One sent from God, and where He first publicly presented Himself to His own nation as their Deliverer.

The passage He selected was the Announcement of the Acceptable Year of the Lord. This harmonises so thoroughly with the Proclamation of the Year of Release, that we may take it as exceedingly probable that the Sabbath Day on which it was uttered was at the beginning of the Sabbath year, autumn, A.D. 26.

We notice the following parallel :—

| | The Sabbath Year. | Christ's Words at Nazareth (Luke iv. 18). |
|---|---|---|
| (1) Good news for the poor. | Release from debts (Deut. xv. 1-3.) | "He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor." |
| (2) Release of captives. | Slaves set free in the seventh year (Deut. xv. 1-3). | "Proclaim release to the captives." "Recovering of sight to the blind" (another form of expressing deliverance). "Send away free those whom tyranny has crushed" (*W. T.*). |
| (3) A year of acceptance. | Opportunity to "hear, and learn to fear the Lord" (Deut. xxxi. 13). | "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." The season of opportunity. |

Instead of acknowledging His claims and accepting Him as their Messiah, a sudden blaze of anger and hatred flared up among His hearers; they hustled Him out of their synagogue, and out of their city, and incited each other to silence His voice by casting Him headlong over the cliff (Luke iv. 29). But that voice had much more work to do in making known the character and will of God, so their attempt was frustrated, and He slipped quietly away to another district.

The chronological evidences which we possess fully allow our placing the reading in the synagogue at the

beginning of the Sabbath year, autumn, A.D. 26—for Christ had gone into Galilee when John was delivered up (April, A.D. 26, see p. 66) (Matt. iv. 12; John iv. 43). He then travelled from synagogue to synagogue (Luke iv. 15). The first place mentioned at which He stayed was Cana (John iv. 46), where He healed the son of a nobleman at distant Capernaum without going there; next we hear of Him at Nazareth, where He Himself alludes to this miraculous cure (Luke iv. 23). He left Nazareth because the people tried to kill Him, and He then dwelt at Capernaum (Matt. iv. 13; Luke iv. 29-31). The next recorded event of which we can give the date was the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v.-vii.), which took place at the early summer of the next year, A.D. 27, because it contains references to the lilies of the field, which bloom at that season.

Hence we see that the reading in the synagogue took place between April, A.D. 26, and April, A.D. 27. It may well therefore have been at the intermediate time of autumn, A.D. 26, when the Sabbath year began, because the visit to Nazareth was both preceded and followed by long tours of healing and preaching (Luke iv. 14, 15; Matt. iv. 13, 23-25).

(*b*) *Quotation* (Isa. ix. 1, 2, xlii. 6, 7).

With reference to this same time at Nazareth and Capernaum the Evangelist Matthew (iv. 12-16) quotes another passage from Isaiah (ix. 1, 2). The words are as follows:—

The land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali,
Toward the sea, beyond Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles,

> The people which sat in darkness
> Saw a great Light,
> And to them which sat in the region and shadow of death,
> To them did Light spring up.

The latter part of this passage contains the thought which is expressed in Isaiah xlii. 6, 7: "I the Lord . . . give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a Light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house".

In these passages the thought contained in the previous quotation, which Christ Himself read, is sustained—light is brought to those in darkness, liberty and release to those in spiritual bondage —and thus the ideas of the Sabbath year are again brought before us.

### (*c*) *The Lord's Prayer.*

The general tenor of the Sermon on the Mount, containing as it does the Lord's prayer, which seeks the coming kingdom, the forgiveness of our debts as we forgive our debtors, and deliverance from evil (Matt. vi. 9-14), is in accord with the tone of the Sabbath year. In this, the year of release, it may at first sight appear to be incon-

gruous that a little previously in His sermon Christ had spoken of casting into prison (Matt. v. 25), but that utterance is a warning against a future captivity from which there will be no release; it gives point to His entreaty, that in the year of opportunity ("whiles thou art with him in the way") Israel should agree with Himself who had become their enemy on account of their rebellion (Isa. lxiii. 10).

We have already (see pp. 77, 78) given reasons for supposing that the Sermon on the Mount was about April, A.D. 27, a little later than the middle of the Sabbath year.

### (*d*) *Anxiety Reproved.*

During the same Sermon Christ warned His hearers repeatedly against anxiety (Matt. vi. 19-34)—a state of mind quite contrary to the tone of the Sabbath year, which reminds of rest and trust in the Lord (Ps. xxxvii. 7). It is further remarkable that a special cause for anxiety, which would be prominent in the minds of many of those around Him, was definitely reproved when He told His hearers not to lay up treasure on earth, and when He exhorted them to trust that God would

provide for them, as He does for the birds, which do not "reap, nor gather into barns" (Matt. vi. 26). These words would be directly appropriate to those whose barns were not well filled, and who might be anxious for the future; as, although the time of year for harvest had come, they would be unable to reap their fields and store their grain in the Sabbath year.

### (*e*) "*The Harvest Truly is Plenteous.*"

The sending out of the twelve disciples and the utterance of the words "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few" (Matt. ix. 37), took place before the plucking of the ears of corn (Matt. xii. 1), but after the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v.-vii.); we therefore conclude that all three events occurred in A.D. 27, during the protracted season for the harvest in Palestine.

The words "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few," spoken at what should have been harvest-time in a Sabbath year, contain a figure by contrast; because the crop which was unsown and only grew of itself (Lev. xxv. 5) must naturally have been a very small one, but the numbers who laboured at it and partook of it, being

the poor (Exod. xxiii. 11) and the stranger (Lev. xxv. 6), must of course have been considerable.

Other contrasted figures, in which also the advantage in the contrast is on the side of the spiritual power and blessing referred to, were used by Christ, as for instance when He spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well, He said: "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John iv. 13, 14); on another occasion He said: "Your fathers did eat the manna in the wilderness, and they died. . . . I am the Living Bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever" (John vi. 49, 51); and when He called Himself the Light of the World (John viii. 12), He contrasted Himself with the lights in the court of the Temple, and with the pillar of fire in the wilderness, which those lights typified.

### (*f*) "*My Yoke is Easy.*"

On the Sabbath year no tilling of the fields was done, consequently the oxen had then but little work to do, the yoke was then easy and the burden light; how readily did these circumstances lend themselves to the deep spiritual lessons which Christ gave when He said: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, . . . ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My

yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matt. xi. 28-30).

It was still evidently the Sabbath year.

(*g*) *Plucking Ears of Corn.*

It is true that according to Deuteronomy xxiii. 25, a man might pluck the ears of corn in a *neighbour's* field at any harvest, but it is difficult to see how travellers (such as the disciples) could be allowed to do so whenever they wished; but in the Sabbath year, the harvest, which grew of itself, was legally for the use of the poor and the stranger (Exod. xxiii. 11; Lev. xxv. 6); there is consequently a special probability that it was the Sabbath year when the disciples plucked the corn (Matt. xii. 1).

(*h*) "*Lord of the Sabbath.*"

We have seen that Christ took advantage of a Sabbath Day at the beginning of the Sabbath year to publicly proclaim Himself at the synagogue in Nazareth when He read the prophecy from Isaiah. Towards the latter part of the same year, in the conversation which followed the plucking the ears of corn, we find Him again taking advantage of a Sabbath Day to proclaim His authority, that He

is greater than the Temple and Lord even of the Sabbath itself (Matt. xii. 8).

On the same day we find the Pharisees taking counsel against Him how they might destroy Him (Matt. xii. 14). This incident towards the close of the Sabbath year reminds us of the attempt to take His life at Nazareth at the beginning of the same year (Luke iv. 28, 29).

(*i*) *Quotation* (Isa. xlii. 1-4).

Matthew iv. 12-16 finds a parallel in Matthew xii. 15-21; in both cases we learn that Christ withdrew; on the first occasion because John was delivered up, and on the second because the Pharisees had taken counsel how they might destroy Him (Matt. xii. 14); their blasphemous opposition then rose to a climax (Matt. xii. 24) when they charged Him with Satanic power.

After the first withdrawal the evangelist quotes Isaiah ix. and xlii., "a Light" of the Gentiles, with reference to Christ, and again after the second withdrawal does he quote Isaiah xlii. in the same connection.

The passage in Matthew xii. 18-21, quoted by the evangelist from Isaiah xlii. 1-4, runs thus:—

Behold, My servant whom I have chosen;
My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased:
I will put My Spirit upon Him,
And He shall declare judgment to the Gentiles.
He shall not strive, nor cry aloud;
Neither shall any one hear His voice in the streets.
A bruised reed shall He not break,
And smoking flax shall He not quench,
Till He send forth judgment unto victory.
And in His name shall the Gentiles hope.

The close of the acceptable year of the Lord—the year of special offer and invitation to the Jewish nation—marks a crisis.

The Jews had definitely and deliberately rejected Him, and from this time studiously began laying schemes how they might destroy Him.

The foregoing quotation from Isaiah marks the beginning of a new era. After rejection by His own people, blessing is now offered to all nations;—twice over in this passage is He described as the Saviour of the Gentiles.

From the context we learn that the quotation referred to a time after the harvest (which grew of itself) A.D. 27 (Matt. xii. 1), and before the parables on sowing, which we naturally estimate to have been at the time of sowing. It is more than likely that this culmination of the national rejection occurred midway between the two seasons—just before Tabernacles, when the acceptable year closed. The foregoing pass-

age from Isaiah describes the new outlook, which opened on the dawn of a new era at the beginning of a new week of years.

### (*j*) *Parables on Sowing.*

Some two months after the Sabbath year was over, and very soon after the beginning of the new week of years, the operation of sowing was again resumed after two years' interval. We can picture to ourselves the interest and attention aroused in an agricultural population under such circumstances.

What could be more appropriate in introducing teaching about the new beginning with the Gentiles than to refer to the operation of sowing, which must have been in the minds of all, and which was to be seen actually carried out all over the country?

Some have seen a figure of the new departure taken at this time in the words of Matthew xiii. 1, when Jesus went "out of the house" (type of the house of Israel) and sat by "the sea-side" (type of the nations, Rev. xvii. 15).

In the Sabbath year the Apostles were told, "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. x. 5, 6).

But now a wider scope is taken, as is shown by the "whosoever" of Matthew xii. 50, irrespective of human birth, and also by the use of the words "the field is the world" (Matt. xiii. 38). The mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven are now spoken of for the first time in each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. xiii. 11; Mark iv. 11; Luke viii. 10). The calling of the Church out from the Gentiles is stated by the Apostle Paul to be a specially great mystery—long hidden, but now revealed (Eph. iii. 1-10).

In harmony with this new outlook we find all the four parables about sowing, *viz.*:—

(1) The Sower (Matt. xiii. 3-23),

(2) The good seed and the tares (Matt. xiii. 24-30),

(3) The mustard seed (Matt. xiii. 31, 32),

(4) The seed growing secretly (Mark iv. 26-29), delivered at a time which was after the harvest A.D. 27 (plucking the ears of corn (Matt. xii. 1)), and before the following Passover (Matt. xiv. 14-21; John vi. 4-13).

There can be little reasonable doubt that the parables were uttered at the intermediate time of sowing; such persistent reference to it forces upon

us the conviction that sowing was actually taking place at the time.

That sowing was really going on when this parable was spoken has long been considered probable; for example, Archbishop Trench[1] wrote: "Christ, lifting up His eyes, may have seen at no great distance a husbandman scattering his seed in the furrows, may have taken in, indeed, the whole scenery of the parable". But the fact that it was the *first* sowing after the cessation in the Sabbath year greatly adds point to the appropriateness of the time of the utterance.

### (*k*) *Feeding the Five Thousand.*

But patience is required between the times of sowing and reaping, and the nearer the time of harvest approached the lower fell the stores of grain available for food; and notwithstanding the good harvest on the sixth year (Lev. xxv. 21), it is easy to see that the poorer classes must have begun to feel the pinch of want, as the months rolled on towards the first harvest after the Sabbath year.

What a harmony would exist if we could find

[1] *Notes on the Parables*, p. 66, where it is stated that Dean Stanley thought the same. Compare also *The Land and the Book*, vol. i., p. 115, Thomson.

that the great miracle of feeding the hungry five thousand men besides women and children took place at this time! A very little search gives abundant evidence that this really was the case, for there was there "grass" (Matt. xiv. 19), "green grass" according to Mark (vi. 39), "much grass" according to John (vi. 10), and the time of grass is a short period during the spring in Palestine; but the time of year and the year itself are definitely settled by John vi. 4, which tells us that the Passover was at hand—the one before the Crucifixion. Consequently we must conclude that the miracle took place in A.D. 28, a very few weeks before the first harvest after the Sabbath year, when want of food must have been experienced by many, and when consequently the need must have been specially great. The conditions therefore harmonise with those of other miracles, when deliverance was only given after great extremities had been reached, *e.g.* the miracles of healing the man sick of the palsy, borne of four (Mark ii. 3-12), the demoniac whom the disciples had failed to cure just after the Transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 14-18), Jairus' daughter (Luke viii. 41-42, 49-56), Lazarus (John xi. 3-4, 14-44) and others.

(*l*) "*Ye seek Me . . . because ye ate of the Loaves.*"

The recognition of this time of want shows the greatness of the temptation to which the multitude had yielded, and which caused the Lord to say to them: "Ye seek Me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled" (John vi. 26).

Continuing to speak of the same subject of lack of bread and its supply, our Lord fittingly described Himself as the Bread of Life (John vi. 35), and gave much deep spiritual teaching in the same figurative language.

(*m*) "*Let the Children first be filled.*"

The words of Christ to the Syro-Phœnician woman, "Let the children first be filled" (Mark vii. 27, see Matt. xv. 26), were spoken shortly after the miracle of feeding the five thousand (Matt. xiv. 14-21) and before the miracle of feeding the four thousand (Matt. xv. 32-38). An allusion to a shortness of supply and husbanding of resources is certainly implied by His words. He might have said, "Let the children first be cured or blessed," but in using the word "filled" He surely adopted the mode of expression in harmony with

the times. What subtle delicacy there is in this allusion to an event connected with the Sabbath year!

(*n*) *Feeding the Four Thousand.*

The miracle of feeding the four thousand took place somewhat later in the year, when the spring grass was dried up by the heat of early summer, for the multitude sat down "on the ground" (Matt. xv. 35; Mark viii. 6), not "on the grass," as at the other miracle; there is no reason to suppose, however, that the two were separated from each other by more than a few weeks; on the contrary they seem to have been nearly at the same time, as soon afterwards, when Christ was speaking of these two miracles, He linked them both together, when He asked His disciples if they remembered them (Matt. xvi. 9, 10). It seems likely that, at the time of feeding the four thousand, harvest had already begun in the lower and warmer parts of the country, and thus the numbers were less, as the need was not quite so widespread as in the former case.

In Manitoba,[1] the wheat-producing province of Canada, money is scarce before harvest, and it is

[1] *Statement*, N. Stevens, late of Manitoba.

customary for some masters to delay paying their men until the crop has been gathered; in out-of-the-way places supplies of food may even run short at this season of the year; in India the cultivators frequently mortgage their crops before they are ripe, and until the harvest comes large numbers suffer from deficiency of food and of other necessaries. We can understand that the same state of want must have occurred in the early summer in Palestine of old among the masses of the people. But want of food would be more pronounced still at a spring just after a Sabbath year, when the supplies which the people could afford to carry with them were doubtless very small; we may safely say that the fact of the hunger of the people harmonises with and breathes the atmosphere of the special season we suppose it to be.

(*o*) *The Lord's Supper.*

The bread and wine at the first supper of the Lord, A.D. 29, were made from corn and grapes grown in the first year after the Sabbath one, A.D. 28; for older produce must have been consumed long previously, and the harvest of A.D. 29 had not yet come

Thus we find three harmonies of the New Covenant, each beginning after a complete period of seven, and each appropriate to the new dispensation which began after the old one; they are:—

(1) The bread and wine at the first Lord's Supper made from the produce of the year after the Sabbath year.

(2) The Resurrection of Christ on the day after the Sabbath Day (Matt. xxviii. 1).

(3) The descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church on the first day of the week, on the day after seven weeks of days had been completed, counting from the Resurrection day, or day of bringing the sheaf of the wave offering of first-fruits (Lev. xxiii. 11, 15, 16; Acts ii. 1, 2).

### (*p*) *General View of the Year.*

In taking a general view of the Sabbath year in the Gospels, we find that, before it began, Christ had not attracted much public attention as a teacher; with perhaps the exception of preaching to the Samaritans (John iv. 39-42), there is no record of His reaching any considerable number before that period began. But in the leisure of the Sabbath year we hear of multitudes with Him

at and after the Sermon on the Mount, and also on other occasions, notably when the crowd was so great that the only access to Him was by making an opening in the roof in order to let down the sick man before Him (Mark ii. 2-4; Luke v. 19).

It is true that after the Sabbath year was concluded multitudes still came, but the fact remains that it was during that period that the crowds first assembled to hear Him, and it was in that year that He gave the great address of the Sermon on the Mount concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. After the Sabbath year was closed we have already noticed that His preaching took a wider scope.

Besides the assertion of His authority at the beginning and towards the close of the Sabbath year, He also manifested it publicly and prominently on several intermediate occasions, for we read that in it "the multitudes were astonished at His teaching: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. vii. 28, 29), and also, "Amazement came upon all, and they spake together, one with another, saying, What is this word? for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come

out" (Luke iv. 36; see also Matt. v. 28, 34, 39, 44; Mark i. 22, 27; John v. 27).

### (H) NO YEAR, EXCEPT THE SECOND IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY, COULD HAVE BEEN THE SABBATH.

In case any should think the foregoing instances are forced allusions to the Sabbath year, and that such examples as we have given are similar to other incidents which are scattered over the whole of Christ's Ministry, it is instructive to suppose any other of its years to have been a Sabbath one, because then we shall find failure of any echoes of the rest year, either in Christ's teaching or in outward circumstances. As an example, Sir Isaac Newton[1] imagined that the Crucifixion took place A.D. 34 in a Sabbath year, and according to his principle, that Christ referred to things present, he endeavoured to find allusions to the year of rest in His teachings, but the only instance he adduces is the statement of Christ at the end of the last Feast of Tabernacles (John vii. 2), when He said to the Jews, "If ye abide in My word . . . the truth shall make you free". Newton supposed that they

[1] *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel*, note on p. 149.

understood those words literally with regard to the present manumission of slaves when they replied, "We be Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to any man: how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?" (John viii. 31-33).

This is the only passage which Newton brings forward in all the Gospels in which he claims to have found a supposed reference to the Sabbath year.

Though all may not agree with him that slaves were actually set free on the Sabbath year (but, on the other hand, after each man had completed six years of servitude) it must be allowed that the idea of freedom and deliverance is quite in accord with the tone of the Sabbath year.

But this supposed reference loses much of its value from the fact that the words were spoken at a Feast of Tabernacles; for thankfulness for the freedom of the nation from Egyptian bondage was expressed at every Feast of Tabernacles, and together with gratitude for the safe ingathering of the fruits of the earth, it was the reason for the great joy always then manifested (Lev. xxiii. 40; Deut. xvi. 14, 15; 1 Kings viii. 2, 66). The living in booths during the feast (Lev. xxiii. 42; Neh.

viii. 14-17) reminded the Hebrews of the wilderness wandering, which in itself was a time of privation and humiliation; but at the same time it recalled the previous deliverance from Egypt and so sounded a note of joy; this deliverance was mentioned by Nehemiah in his prayer just after a Feast of Tabernacles, when he said: "Thou sawest the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red Sea; and shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land" (Neh. ix. 9, 10, 18); Solomon also remembered deliverance from Egyptian bondage at the Feast of Tabernacles, when he dedicated his temple and quoted the words of the LORD referring to "the day that I brought forth My people Israel out of Egypt" (1 Kings viii. 2, 16, see also verses 21, 51 and 53 of the same chapter).

The comparison to Egyptian bondage from which the LORD led forth His people was appropriate at *any* Feast of Tabernacles, because Christ was speaking of the bondage of sin (John viii. 34), from which He delivers all who are willing; there thus seems to be little ground for supposing that He referred to the release of slaves in the Sabbath year.

No reliance, therefore, can be placed on this solitary supposed reference to an incident of the Sabbath year, and it is believed that other attempts with any other year except the second in the Ministry will be equally unsuccessful.

In the Appendix (p. 279) it is shown that most probably the Sabbath year A.D. 26-27 contained an extra or intercalary month; it would appear to be harmonious that "the acceptable year of the Lord" should be graciously lengthened out.

## (I) CONCLUSION THAT A.D. 29 WAS THE YEAR OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

All the harmonies in connection with the Sabbath year which we have investigated thus indicate A.D. 29 to be the year of the Crucifixion, and we have a confirmation of the correctness of the same conclusion drawn from harmonies connected with the Morning Star in the last chapter.

Both these lines of inference were probably perfectly obvious to the first readers of the Gospels in Palestine, as great use was made of the Morning Star for the practical purposes of life, and the periods of its shining during its eight years' cycle could easily be remembered; also the dates of the

Sabbath years must necessarily have fixed themselves on the minds of all Jews, and the allusions to them would have been readily understood. But other times, other manners; we do not make use of the planet Venus to foretell daybreak, and we have not had the observance of the Sabbath year practically forced upon us by any periods of lack of bread; consequently both harmonies have long been lost to sight.

As one line of inference is connected with an almost perfect eight years' cycle and the other with a perfect one of seven years, both cycles will only agree once in $8 \times 7$ or in fifty-six years; we thus see that our argument would have pointed to the same conclusion if the possible historic limits for the date of the Crucifixion had been a good deal greater than from A.D. 28-33.

Some may say that the harmonies we have referred to are mere straws of little or no value—but even straws will indicate the direction of force, if all point the same way; the value of each separate harmony which we have noticed may be small by itself, but the combined effect of the large number which we have mentioned must be allowed to be great. Nay, more, the careful consideration of

these harmonies attest the life-drawn presentment of events by the inspired evangelists; and the deductions we have made from facts, some of which lie a little below the surface, contradict any possible supposition that the Gospel narratives could be mere legendary stories, told long after the events which they describe. On the other hand, the indirect references to the Sabbath year are evidently those of writers addressing those who were familiar with that ordinance, as no explanation is given of it. Thus these references confirm the early date of the Gospels and negative the suggestion put forward by some critics that they were written in the second century, because the observance of the Sabbath year was swept away by the Romans on the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70.

# THE NATIVITY.

Hark! the herald angels sing,[1]
Glory to the new-born King,
" Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled ".
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,—
Christ is born in Bethlehem.

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a Virgin's womb!
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the Incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus our Immanuel.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by;
Born, that man no more may die;
Born to raise the sons of earth;
Born to give them second birth.

—*C. Wesley*, altered by *G. Whitefield* and *M. Madan*.

[1] The original text of the beginning of this hymn is :—

" Hark, how all the welkin rings,
Glory to the King of Kings ".

It will be found so printed in the versions by Whitefield, 1753, and Madan, 1760, *vide Athenæum*, 29th Sept., 1906. This is more accurate than the popular versions, because it is not recorded that the angels *sang*, but they *said*, " Glory to God," etc. (Luke ii. 13, 14).

# CHAPTER IV.

## THE DATE OF THE NATIVITY.

(A) FURTHER APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE THAT SCRIPTURE METAPHORS REFER TO THINGS PRESENT.

(B) EXPLANATION OF FIG. VI. (at the end of the book), containing the Seven Years' Cycle of the Sabbath Year.

„ „ Eight „ „ „ period of shining of the Morning Star.

„ „ Fourteen „ „ „ Roman Enrolments.

(C) THE DATE OF THE NATIVITY DETERMINED BY GOSPEL HARMONIES.

(*a*) *The Nativity was at least five months after the beginning of a period of shining of the Morning Star.*

(*b*) *The Nativity was at a Feast of Tabernacles.*

(1) *Great Joy was Characteristic of the Feast of Tabernacles.*

(2) *Living in Booths was Characteristic of the Feast of Tabernacles.*

(*c*) *Conclusion that the Nativity was at the Feast of Tabernacles* B.C. 8, *probably on the first day.*

(D) THE DATE OF THE NATIVITY DETERMINED BY THE STAR IN THE EAST.

(*a*) *The Star in the East was not a Special Meteor or a Conjunction of Planets.*

(*b*) *The Star in the East was the Morning Star.*

(*c*) *The Morning Star was at the End of its Period when the Magi arrived.*

(d) *The Magi would not travel in Hot Weather.*

(e) *The Magi came only a very few Months after the Nativity.*

(f) *Conclusion that the Nativity was in the Autumn of* B.C. 8.

(E) THE DATE OF THE NATIVITY DETERMINED BY HISTORICAL METHODS.

(a) *The Nativity could not have been on 25th December.*

(b) *The Nativity was between* B.C. 10 *and* B.C. 5, *according to St. Luke and Josephus.*

(c) *The Nativity was between* B.C. 8 *and* B.C. 5 (*the special rule of Quirinius*), *according to St. Luke.*

(d) *The Nativity was between* B.C. 9 *and* B.C. 7 (*the ordinary rule of St. Saturninus*), *according to Tertullian.*

(e) *The Nativity was* B.C. 8 (*the first Enrolment*), *according to St. Luke.*

(f) *The first Enrolment* (*which fixes the date of the Nativity*) *was between August and October for the sake of convenience.*

(g) *The first Enrolment was at the Feast of Tabernacles, on account of the crowding of the Inn at Bethlehem.*

(h) *The first Enrolment was on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles to suit the Policy of Herod.*

(i) *Enrolment at the Feast of Tabernacles* B.C. 8 (*a year after the Sabbath Year*) *specially suited the Policy of Herod.*

(j) *Conclusion that the Nativity was at the Feast of Tabernacles* B.C. 8, *probably on the first day.*

(F) THE FIRST DAY OF TABERNACLES B.C. 8 SHOULD BE ACCEPTED AS THE DATE OF THE NATIVITY.

(a) *The Method of Gospel Harmonies has again given Good Results.*

NOTES.

(1) *Confirmation of* B.C. 8 *for the date of the Nativity.*

(2) *Christ's Age at the beginning of His Ministry.*

(3) *Harmonies in the Age of Thirty-two Years.*

## (A) FURTHER APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE THAT SCRIPTURE METAPHORS REFER TO THINGS PRESENT.

EVEN among educated people there are many who have not been trained to appreciate the integral calculus with its summations of the values of vanishing quantities—it seems impalpable, elusive and imaginary to many. But though they may fail to grasp it themselves, they have confidence in its truth, because whenever they are able to test its results by their own methods, they always find agreement; in other cases, when it solves problems which their methods fail to do, they will accept its results; because these results cannot be contradicted by any facts known to them.

Some reader may have thought the deductions from the harmonies in the last two chapters impalpable, elusive and imaginary, but he must perceive that the results obtained have agreed again and again with those obtained from ordinary historical data. Is it not possible, therefore, that if a reader fails to be convinced by the lines of deduction which we have employed, the difficulty

may be in himself and in his want of appreciation of the probable methods of thought and subtleties suited to the ancient Hebrew cast of mind, which was so very different from our own at the present time?

We will suppose, however, that a fair-minded reader says: "Although this method of inference seems somewhat unusual, I must allow that it has repeatedly given a result in exact accord with the generally received date A.D. 29 for the Crucifixion, hence I have *some* confidence in it; further, if the employment of the same methods will indicate the date of the Nativity with clearness and consistency —a date which is only known approximately as somewhere about B.C. 6 or 7, of which Scaliger[1] said that God alone, not man, can determine the true day—if the method does *that* I will accept the result, provided, of course, it does not clash with or contradict any well-established fact of history; moreover, I shall look upon this further application as another test of the truth of this method of inference."

We now proceed to search for the date of the Nativity.

[1] *Chron.*, vol. i., p. 199, Hales.

(B) EXPLANATION OF FIG. VI. (at the end of the book), containing the Seven Years' Cycle of the Sabbath Year, the Eight Years' Cycle of the period of shining of the Morning Star, and the Fourteen Years' Cycle of the Roman Enrolments.

We begin by examining Fig. VI.[1] at the end of the book; it contains both the time scales of seven and eight years which we have previously used separately, *viz.* the week of years, and the octave of years of the cycle of the periods of the shining of the Morning Star; for the sake of simplicity, the periods of shining of the Evening Star are omitted.

The cycle of the enrolments every fourteen years enforced by the Roman Government throughout their regularly settled empire is also inserted; the enrolment years are indicated by ovals marking the years B.C. 8-7 (tentatively), and also A.D. 7-8 and A.D. 21-22. As the first of these enrolments, B.C. 8-7, was carried out in a modified form in Palestine, the outline of its oval is lighter than those of later years; these years began at about the vernal equinox.

[1] It will be noticed that some years are omitted in Fig. VI.—this is simply on account of want of room—but no events recorded in the Gospels took place in the omitted years, nor were any of them enrolment or Sabbath years.

## (C) THE DATE OF THE NATIVITY DETERMINED BY GOSPEL HARMONIES.

Let us now turn to the method of inferences from harmonies, which we have pursued in the last two chapters, in order to determine the date of the Nativity with greater exactness than has hitherto been attained.

We proceed to establish the great probability of the two facts that (*a*) The Nativity was at least five months after the beginning of a period of shining of the Morning Star, and (*b*) the Nativity was at a Feast of Tabernacles. We first investigate the reasons for inferring that :—

### (*a*) *The Nativity was at least five months after the beginning of a period of shining of the Morning Star.*

At the outset we must consider what reason there is for supposing that the Morning Star was shining at all when the Lord was born. In Malachi (iii. 1), as we have already seen, the Baptist is referred to under the figure of the Morning Star, as the forerunner of Christ ; but the Morning Star itself may be called "My Messenger who shall prepare the way before Me". It is not unusual for inanimate objects to be thus spoken of in

Scripture, *e.g.* in Psalm lxxxix. 37 we have "the faithful witness in the sky," and in Psalm cxlviii. 3 the Sun, Moon and Stars of light are exhorted to praise the LORD. Consequently we can reasonably suppose that the Morning Star *was* shining at the Nativity; further, if the Morning Star was the herald of the coming One, it is fitting to imagine that a somewhat prolonged notice should be given; it would be more dignified and stately for the one to precede the other by a considerable interval, than that both should come almost together; and further, if the office of the Morning Star was simply to herald the Birth of Christ we may fittingly expect it to withdraw its shining not long after the Advent, when all who understood the heralding had obeyed and worshipped the Heavenly King, on the principle that a bell, which summons a congregation, ceases to be rung when all have assembled at the appointed hour.

We shall find this supposition of a prolonged heralding borne out by the following inference. According to the principle of metaphors being taken from things present, we inferred that the Morning Star was actually shining when the Lord Jesus (Matt. xi. 10), quoting Malachi iii. 1, spoke of

the Baptist as "My messenger before Thy face" (see pp. 69, 77). Consistently following the same line of thought, we may reasonably infer that the Morning Star was also shining more than thirty years previously when Zacharias quoted the same Scripture (Mal. iii. 1) at the circumcision of his son John the Baptist (Luke i. 76). Even had this appropriate passage not been quoted at the time, we might have inferred that the herald in the sky would harmoniously have been shining at the birth of the human herald.

How long before the Lord was John born?

As the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary was made in the sixth month after the announcement to Zacharias (Luke i. 13, 24, 26), it follows that the Baptist must have been born five to six months before Christ.

We have thus inferred that both Christ and John were born when the Morning Star was shining, therefore both must have been born during the *same* period of its shining, because these periods are separated from each other by greater intervals of time than six months (see Figs. IV. and VI.).

Consequently Christ was born at least five

months after the beginning of a period of shining of the Morning Star.

(*b*) *The Nativity was at a Feast of Tabernacles, probably on the first day,*

The Law, we are told, has "a shadow of the good things to come" (Heb. x. 1). If read aright, the various ordinances and feasts of the Old Testament are found to refer to and foreshadow many events and doctrines of the New Testament. A well-known American writer[1] has said: "Many speak slightingly of the types, but they are as accurate as mathematics; they fix the sequence of events in redemption as rigidly as the order of sunrise and noontide is fixed in the heavens". The deductions drawn from Gospel harmonies in this book attest the truth of this statement.

We have already noticed that the Sabbath year began at the Feast of Tabernacles, the great Feasts of Passover and Weeks following in due course.

Our Lord's death took place at the Passover (Matt. xxvii. 50), probably at the very hour when the paschal lambs were killed (see p. 280, Appen-

[1] *The Ministry of the Spirit*, p. 28, Rev. A. J. Gordon, D.D.

dix). "Our Passover . . . hath been sacrificed, even Christ" (1 Cor. v. 7), the great Antitype foretold for so many ages by the yearly shedding of blood at that feast. The first Passover at the time of the Exodus was held on the anniversary of the day when the promise (accompanied by sacrifice) was given to Abraham, that his seed should inherit the land of Canaan (Exod. xii. 41; Gen. xv. 8-18).

Christ rose from the dead on the morrow after the Sabbath after the Passover (John xx. 1), the day on which the sheaf of first-fruits, earnest of the future harvest, was waved before the Lord (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11)—hence we are told that as "Christ the first-fruits" (1 Cor. xv. 20, 23) rose, so believers will also afterwards rise. This day was the anniversary of the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. xii.-xiv.), and as in the case of the Passover it was also a date memorable in remote history, for it was the day on which the ark rested on Ararat (Gen. viii. 4). (The month Nisan, which had been the seventh month, became the first at the Exodus—Exod. xii. 2.[1]) Thus the Resurrection of Christ was heralded by two most beautiful and perfect types

[1] *The Coming Prince*, p. 118, note, Sir R. Anderson.

occurring almost (possibly exactly) on the same day of the year—by the renewed earth emerging from the waters of the Flood, and by the redeemed people emerging from the waters of the Red Sea.

The next great event of the Christian dispensation—the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts ii. 1, 2) —occurred at the Feast of Weeks, or Harvest, or Pentecost (Lev. xxiii. 15, 16). It was at this season that the Law had been given on Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 1, 10, 11).[1] It is remarkable that the inauguration of the New Covenant took place on the anniversary of the establishment of the Old Covenant; showing that the dispensation of Law was replaced by that of the Spirit (Heb. viii. 7; 2 Cor. iii. 6).

Since there is such manifest design in the timing of our Lord's Death and Resurrection and of the descent of the Holy Spirit, the idea is suggested that the Nativity may well have occurred at the remaining great Feast of the Lord—at that of Tabernacles, which began the Sabbath year.

Let us search and see if we can discover any harmonies between the characteristics of this feast and the events recorded in connection with the Nativity.

[1] *The Portable Commentary*, p. 48, Rev. R. Jamieson, D.D.

As we have previously noticed there were two great characteristics of the Feast of Tabernacles: (1) Great joy, (2) Living in booths.

(1) *Great Joy Characteristic of the Feast of Tabernacles.*—The Israelites were told at this feast "Ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God" (Lev. xxiii. 40), and "Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast . . . thou shalt be altogether joyful" (Deut. xvi. 14, 15). Solomon dedicated his Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles, and the people were afterwards sent away "joyful and glad of heart" (1 Kings viii. 2, 66; 2 Chron. vii. 10).

There was no public rejoicing at the Nativity; on the contrary, shortly afterwards Herod was "troubled and all Jerusalem with him" (Matt. ii. 3). The Lord came to be rejected by men, but we find the first characteristic of the Feast of Tabernacles paralleled by the expectant and spiritually-minded. Before the Nativity both the Virgin Mary and Elizabeth rejoiced, in looking forward to it (Luke i. 38, 42, 44, 46, 47). At the Nativity an angel appeared to the shepherds, and brought them good tidings of great joy, and then "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude

of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest". The shepherds then came to the infant Saviour and returned "glorifying and praising God" (Luke ii. 9-20). Forty days after the Nativity, at the Purification, devout Simeon, who had been long waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the venerable Anna who was a constant worshipper, joined in with their notes of praise and gladness (Luke ii. 22-38), and lastly the wise men from the East "rejoiced with exceeding great joy" when they saw the Star indicating where the Saviour was, and they came into the house, saw the young Child, and presented the gifts they had brought (Matt. ii. 9-11).

(2) *Living in Booths Characteristic of the Feast of Tabernacles.*—The command given to the Hebrews concerning the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles was "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days" (Lev. xxiii. 42); we also read, "In the feast of the seventh month . . . all the congregation . . . made booths, and dwelt in the booths" (Neh. viii. 14, 17).

The living in booths finds a parallel in the language of the Apostle John, when he wrote con-

cerning the birth of the Lord, "The Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us" (John i. 14, margin), and Christ Himself employed a somewhat similar figure when He spoke of His body in which He resided for the time and said, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John ii. 19)—words misunderstood by His enemies and afterwards quoted against Him (Matt. xxvi. 61, xxvii. 40).

> It is worthy of note that the Greek word[1] used for Temple by our Lord was *ναός, dwelling place* or *sanctuary*, which is "more limited and more sacred than *ἱερόν*. At Jerusalem the whole precinct of the Temple-buildings was the *ἱερόν*, the Holy House itself was the *ναός*."

It was at the Feast of Tabernacles that the glory of Jehovah filled the house which King Solomon had prepared for Him (1 Kings viii. 2, 10, 11; 2 Chron. v. 3, 13, 14), and it would seem to have been at the beginning or first day of the feast, the fifteenth day of the month; consequently it would appear to be harmonious that the Advent of the Lord Jesus in the body divinely prepared for Him (Heb. x. 5) should also take place at the same feast and most suitably on the first day of its celebration.

[1] *Ephesian Studies*, note on p. 93, Bishop Handley Moule.

It will be noticed that the glory of the Lord did not cover the tent of meeting in the wilderness and fill the tabernacle, at the Feast of Tabernacles, but it did so on the first day of the first month of the second year after the departure from Egypt (Exod. xl. 17, 34, 35). We must remember that there was no Feast of Tabernacles in the wilderness, neither was the Sabbath year yet kept; but both ordinances were to be observed when the Hebrews entered the Promised Land (Exod. xxxiv. 22; Lev. xxiii. 10, 34, xxv. 2). No agricultural operations were carried out during the forty years' wandering.

As the Feast of Tabernacles inaugurated the Sabbath year, we judge that the glory of the Lord filled the Temple on the *first* day of the feast, as that would be in harmony with what had happened in the tabernacle in the wilderness when the glory of the Lord filled it on the *first* day of the only style of year then observed.

Edersheim,[1] writing of the Feast of Tabernacles says, " It is remarkable how many allusions to this feast occur in the writings of the prophets, as if its types were the goal of all their desires ".

(*c*) *Conclusion that the Nativity was at the Feast of Tabernacles* B.C. 8, *probably on the first day.*

We shall investigate historical methods later on, but we may now say that it is universally accepted that the Nativity could not have been earlier than the beginning of B.C. 10 or later than the end of B.C. 5 (see p. 163).

[1] *The Temple*, etc., note on p. 272, A. Edersheim.

We shall therefore confine ourselves to that period in our search.

We have inferred that the Nativity occurred at a Feast of Tabernacles (probably on the first day) and that the Morning Star had then been shining for at least five months.

A glance at Fig. VI. informs us that the only year, within the possible historical limits, which satisfies these conditions is B.C. 8.

For at the Feast of Tabernacles (say the autumnal equinox)

B.C. 10, the Morning Star was only just beginning its period (see Fig. VI.).

B.C. 9, there was no Morning Star at all.

B.C. 8, the conditions are completely satisfied.

B.C. 7, there was no Morning Star at all.

B.C. 6, there was no Morning Star at all.

B.C. 5, the Morning Star had only been shining for about four months previously.

The Feast of Tabernacles B.C. 8 presents the further harmony that it was specially suited to the occasion, as it was the first after a Sabbath year, and consequently a specially joyful one. Thus, even if we neglect the consideration of the Morning Star, we still have the Feast of Tabernacles

B.C. 8 indicated for the date of the Nativity by the method of Gospel harmonies connected with the Sabbath year (see pp. 193, 255).

## (D) THE DATE OF THE NATIVITY DETERMINED BY THE STAR IN THE EAST.

Dean Alford remarks in his Commentary on the New Testament that "the expression of the Magi, 'we have seen His Star,' does not seem to point to any miraculous appearance, but to something observed in the course of their watching of the heavens". This seems natural and probable.

### (*a*) *The Star in the East was not a Special Meteor or a Conjunction of Planets.*

Some have supposed the Star in the East to have been a special meteor sent on purpose, but it seems much more natural to conclude that it was some orb of heaven shining in the ordinary course of nature; because it appears to be a principle in miracles to use existing agents in a miraculous way, rather than to create fresh ones; for instance, when Joshua wanted light, another Sun was not created, but the light of the existing one was miraculously controlled; and when Christ fed the multitudes He did not specially create

bread, but He miraculously multiplied the existing stock; many similar instances could be given.

As we *are* told of a subsequent miraculous change in the Star in the East, and after that again of Divine information given to the Magi in a dream, it seems natural to suppose that no miracle at all had happened to the wise men previous to their arrival at Jerusalem, because we are not told of any Divine interposition before that time.

It may perhaps be thought that as the Star in the East was called *His* Star by the Magi, it was one specially sent for the occasion; but this suggestion can have no weight, because when Christ was speaking of God the Father in the Sermon on the Mount He said, "He maketh His Sun to rise on the evil and the good" (Matt. v. 45). As the ordinary great luminary is certainly intended in this passage, it must follow that the expression "His Star" may refer to one of the well-known orbs of heaven.

A conjunction of planets has been thought by Kepler and other astronomers to be the Star seen at Bethlehem; but the appearances at conjunctions depend on the positions of two or more stars,

and they are changing from night to night; we have no account of stars, nor of any special alteration until the marvellous change when the single Star moved in front of the Magi and led them on their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and no appearance at a conjunction of planets could explain *that* wondrous movement.

(*b*) *The Star in the East seen by the Wise Men was the Morning Star.*

We ask, what were the characteristics of the Star seen by the Magi?

(1) It was twice specially mentioned as seen "in the East" (Matt. ii. 2, 9), inferentially it was not also to be seen in the South and West as other stars are.

(2) It had been visible for some considerable period; the wise men had doubtless seen it in their own Eastern country, from which the journey would involve weeks, possibly months, of travel. That it had appeared for some considerable time is also to be inferred from Herod's question, "what time the Star appeared" (Matt. ii. 7), and from his subsequent action in fixing on the maximum age of the infants to be murdered "from two years

old[1] and under, according to the time which he had carefully learned of the wise men" (Matt. ii. 16).

What ordinary celestial body bears the characteristics we have just referred to?

Surely the reply must be the Morning Star, which is only seen in the East, and which shines continuously at the end of each night for a period of about nine lunar months in the latitude of Palestine, an object which the Magi must have observed over and over again in the course of their watching of the heavens.

Modern writers have failed to make this identification, most probably because of the very small importance attached to the Morning Star by us Westerns. But we have seen in chapter i. that the Herald of dawn was a very familiar object indeed to the Easterns in Bible times. If one can imagine oneself in the position of an ancient Hebrew, it seems highly probable that mention of a Star in the East would suggest to the mind

[1] Greswell states, in his *Dissertations upon a Harmony of the Gospels*, vol. ii., p. 136, that a Jewish child who had completed one month of his second year would be reckoned as two years old; he consequently concludes that thirteen months was the utmost limit of age of the murdered children.

the most familiar of all the stars, so often watched for before dawn, and seen only in the Eastern quarter of the heavens.

Some may say the Morning Star could not have moved from the East to come and stand over where the young child was (Matt. ii. 9). But there is no greater difficulty in supposing that this miracle was effected on the Morning Star, than on any other of the heavenly bodies, whether meteor, planet or fixed star.

There is no need to suppose that the whole bulk of the planet Venus was compressed into a small luminous object, which moved through our atmosphere to indicate a particular spot on earth. Scripture language, like our own, speaks of appearances, not facts, when describing the movements of celestial objects; thus both the Bible and we make mention of the sun rising and setting, which are appearances only. Even the modern astronomer not unfrequently finds it convenient to speak in the same way. Let us take one instance out of several. At the transit of Venus 1882, the observers noted "the times of internal contact of the discs of the sun and of the planet at ingress and at egress"; these were *appearances* only,

the planet did not enter the sun, neither did the two orbs touch each other at all; on the contrary, they were and still are many millions of miles apart; but the expression was a convenient one to employ.

Should the records of the last transit of Venus be lost and rediscovered some thousands of years hence, it would be most absurd if some pedantic critic made the deduction, from the language employed, that we had been ignorant of the immense distance which is always maintained between the planet Venus and the Sun.

We do not lessen the miraculous character of the movement of the Star in the East by supposing that the sacred text described appearances only; what really took place, or how it was done, none can tell; it was a miracle; the light of the Star was miraculously modified to serve the Divine purpose.

If we accept the conclusion arrived at from Gospel harmonies that the Morning Star was actually shining at the time of the Nativity, the probability that it was identical with the Star in the East seen by the Magi is evidently greatly increased.

### (*c*) *The Morning Star was at the End of its Period when the Magi arrived.*

We take it for granted, as before, that we need only investigate the period B.C. 10 to B.C. 5. We assume that the Star in the East and the Morning Star are the same; how shall we be helped in finding the date of the Nativity?

Whether we consider that the maximum age of the murdered infants was thirteen or twenty-four months, each considerably exceeds the nine months' period of shining of the Morning Star. But this is not surprising, as "it is at least certain that a man of his (Herod's) ferocious disposition would not hesitate to take the widest possible range of time, in order to accomplish his purpose more thoroughly".[1]

But, at the same time, as the maximum age fixed by Herod was somewhat high, we come to the conclusion that the Morning Star had been shining for its full period, and that it was consequently just on the point of disappearing from the Eastern sky at the time of the visit of the Magi.

[1] *The Speaker's Commentary*, on Matthew ii. 16.

(*d*) *The Magi would not travel in Hot Weather.*

The accompanying table is deduced from the data used in the construction of Fig. VI.; in fact the information given in it is the same as that indicated diagrammatically; the atmospheric conditions and the keenness of the observer's vision prevent giving the day in each month of the appearance and disappearance of the Morning Star, but the table is sufficiently exact for our purpose.

| Date. | Morning Star. | |
|---|---|---|
| B.C. | Began Shining. | Ceased Shining. |
| 10 | August. | — |
| 9 | — | May. |
| 8 | March. | December. |
| 7 | October. | — |
| 6 | — | July. |
| 5 | May. | — |

A couple of months seems to be a reasonable estimate for the time occupied by the wise men on their journey, and it is probable they would not travel in the hot weather, as caravan journeys to Palestine were not made at that season of the year. Hence in order to select the particular period of the shining of the Morning Star which contained the Nativity, we must select one whose *termination*

fell between the end of December and April, in order to allow of a previous two months' journey in cool weather. Evidently the periods of the Morning Star (see table, p. 158) ending May, B.C. 9, and July, B.C. 6, must be rejected, because the termination of the period of shining of the Morning Star is not contained in the period December to April in either year; also the years B.C. 10, 7 and 5 must be rejected, because none of them contain a termination of a period of the Morning Star. The period of shining ending December, B.C. 8, satisfies the conditions perfectly.

(*e*) *The Magi came only a very few Months after the Nativity.*

We may perhaps say that the Magi could have arrived in May, B.C. 9, for that would only have involved heat at the very end of the journey, which could have been borne. We find, however, other reasons which negative this time for their arrival.

Lewin has shown that the Nativity must have been in hot weather, which ends in Palestine during October. Sheep are securely folded in winter at night for protection, as they will feed during the day at that season of the year; but in the summer

and early autumn, sheep will not eat during the heat of the day, so they have to be left to graze in the open at night guarded by shepherds (Luke ii. 8).

If the Magi arrived in May, B.C. 9, the Nativity could not have been later than the middle of April, because the Purification (which was forty days after birth, Lev. xii. 2-4; Luke ii. 22) came *before* the visit of the Magi, as the Holy Family went to Egypt immediately after the wise men had seen them (Matt. ii. 13, 14).

Spring weather in the uplands of Judæa is somewhat uncertain, but it is not hot before May, for the Rev. Dr. Jessup of Beyrût states that his son was snowed up for two days in Bethel on the 10th of April (in 1886). Hence the Nativity could not have occurred in the year B.C. 9, but if the Magi paid their visit in May of that year, the Nativity must have been sometime in the hot weather of the previous year B.C. 10, when the Morning Star was shining, *i.e.* between August and October.

Supposing then that the Nativity were in October, B.C. 10, we have an interval of seven months between the Nativity and the visit; this long period is most unlikely, as the wise men would doubtless come as soon as they could, and

they would not have allowed the cold months suitable for travel to slip away.

Also if the Nativity were in B.C. 10 the heralding given by the Morning Star could not have been much more than two months, which is not so stately or so suitable as the seven months possible, if the Nativity were in B.C. 8.

(*f*) *Conclusion that the Nativity was in the Autumn of* B.C. 8.

Hence we conclude that this line of investigation indicates the autumn of B.C. 8 for the Nativity, for we have seen that it took place in *hot* weather; the Magi most probably made their journey in *cool* weather, and it is not likely that the Nativity and the arrival of the Magi were more than a very few months apart.

## (E) THE DATE OF THE NATIVITY DETERMINED BY HISTORICAL METHODS.

We now proceed to consider the historical data which we possess for fixing the date of the Nativity.

(*a*) *The Nativity could not have been on 25th December.*

We shall begin by considering when it could *not* have been; the day in the year which we now

observe cannot be correct. It is not calculated according to the soli-lunar method of the Hebrews, as are our Easter and Whitsunday, so even if it did agree at times with the Hebrew anniversary it could not generally be correct, as the 25th December falls on different days of the lunar month in different years. Hebrew anniversaries took place with relation to the same phase of the moon, as for instance the killing of the Passover and the first day of Tabernacles were each just about full moon.

But the conclusive argument against the 25th of December is that of Lewin's about the sheep in the open, to which we have just drawn attention on p. 159. Milton[1] therefore was not correct when he poetically wrote that it was the winter wild when Christ was born and that the snow threw "the saintly veil of maiden white" over the ground.

Historians appear to agree that our present Christmas Day, 25th December, was not adopted as the birthday of Christ until after A.D. 300; that day had probably been previously devoted, as Sir Isaac Newton suggests, to some form of Sun

[1] *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, lines 29, 39, 42.

worship connected with the winter solstice. When Christianity was made the state religion of the Roman world, the old winter festival received a Christian name.

(*b*) *The Nativity was between* B.C. 10 *and* B.C. 5, *according to St. Luke and Josephus.*

It is generally allowed that the Nativity could not have been before B.C. 10, because, on any of the generally recorded dates for the Crucifixion, that would involve a considerably greater age than thirty years, when Christ began His ministry, and we are told (Luke iii. 23) that He was then only "about thirty years of age".

Josephus states [1] that when King Herod was in a dying state he ordered the high-priest to be burnt to death; he also records that this dreadful sentence was carried out, and that there was an eclipse of the moon the same night; he further adds that Herod died very soon afterwards and just before the Passover B.C. 4. This record is strongly confirmed by the fact that it has been calculated that an eclipse of the moon (about four-tenths eclipsed), visible at Jerusalem, actually

[1] *Ant.*, Bk. xvii., Chap. vi., 4.

took place on the night of the 12th-13th March, B.C. 4 (about 3 A.M.), which was just four weeks before the following Passover. Hence we may regard it as practically certain that Herod died (Matt. ii. 19) shortly before the 10th April, which was the date of the Paschal full moon in the year B.C. 4. The Nativity must have taken place at least three and a half months before that date, consequently not later than the end of the year B.C. 5; because the Holy Family were at Bethlehem for forty days after the Nativity, they then went up to Jerusalem for the Purification (Lev. xii. 2-4; Luke ii. 22), returned to Bethlehem, received the visit of the Magi, departed into Egypt and remained there until Herod was dead (Matt. ii. 11, 13, 15, 19)—all of these events must have occupied more than three and a half months.

(*c*) *The Nativity was between* B.C. 8 *and* B.C. 5 (*the special rule of Quirinius*), *according to St. Luke.*

It is well known from historical sources that the Roman enrolment in Syria was held in B.C. 8-7, and it is well established that Sentius Saturninus ruled that country from B.C. 9 (a few say from B.C. 8) to B.C. 7, and he was succeeded

at once by Quinctilius Varus, who ruled until B.C. 4.

St. Luke states, however, that Quirinius was governor of Syria (Luke ii. 2) at the time of the enrolment, when the Nativity occurred. Until quite recently this apparent discrepancy between Scripture and ordinary historical records presented an insuperable difficulty.

A debt of gratitude from all lovers of the Bible is due to Professor Sir William Ramsay for the masterly manner in which he has demonstrated the truth of the evangelist's statement, which had often been called in question by hostile critics; they supposed that Luke had confused the enrolment at the Nativity with the next one, fourteen years later, when it is well known that Quirinius ruled in Syria in the ordinary manner. Josephus tells of grave disorders at this time, and these troubles are also alluded to in Acts v. 37, where it is stated that Judas of Galilee perished at that time, and his followers were dispersed.

The critics had not, however, noticed, or they had brushed aside, the statement that the enrolment at the time of the Nativity is pointedly spoken of by the evangelist as *the first*.

Quirinius undoubtedly twice ruled in Syria; the exact date of his first term of office is uncertain, but Ramsay brings evidence, chiefly from an inscription discovered during recent years, that it was a short one, contained within the period about B.C. 8 to B.C. 5,[1] when he was engaged as a direct envoy of the Emperor in waging war, for imperial purposes, against tribes on the borders of Syria. In virtue of this position, he would rank above the ordinary ruler, who carried on his usual duties in the internal government of the country at the same time, but subordinate to Quirinius. The Professor gives instances of similar arrangements in other periods of Roman history, and so he infers that this was the accepted procedure under the special circumstances of a frontier war.

From the imperial point of view, which Luke always took in his writings, Quirinius would be described as governor; from a provincial point of view the ordinary governor would be mentioned as ruling. Dating by the period of governing of the general in command of the frontier expedition would be more accurate than dating by the reign

[1] *Was Christ born in Bethlehem?* pp. 149, 185, 237, 241, Professor W. M. Ramsay, M.A., D.C.L.

of the ordinary ruler, as the former only exercised his functions for the short time while the war lasted.

The Greek word used in Luke ii. 2, translated "was governor," is well fitted to describe the special authority wielded by Quirinius at that time.[1]

(*d*) *The Nativity was between* B.C. 9 *and* B.C. 7 (*the ordinary rule of S. Saturninus*), *according to Tertullian.*

Tertullian has distinctly stated that the enrolment in Palestine in which the Nativity occurred was when Sentius Saturninus ruled in Syria; he is known to have governed from B.C. 9 (possibly from B.C. 8) to B.C. 7. Tertullian's testimony, however, has generally been regarded as untrustworthy, because it seemed to contradict Luke's statement that the Nativity took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

In view, however, of the fact that (under the special circumstances existing at the time) it was quite in accord with Roman usage to describe both Quirinius and Saturninus as ruling (each in their own manner) at the same time, there is every

[1] *Was Christ born in Bethlehem?* pp. 229, 245, Professor W. M. Ramsay, M.A., D.C.L.

reason to accept the testimony of Tertullian, that Saturninus really was the regular governor of Syria at the time of the Nativity.

(*e*) *The Nativity was* B.C. 8 (*the first Enrolment*), *according to St. Luke.*

We have already alluded to the fourteen years' cycle of the Roman enrolments; it is only of late years that they have attracted attention, through the discoveries on Egyptian rubbish heaps, by Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt, of some of the actual documents which had been used for that purpose at the enrolments of A.D. 20 and subsequently; they are headed ἀπογράφή, the very word used in Luke ii. 1, 2 and Acts v. 37. The same system of census-taking applied also to all other countries, besides Egypt, in the Roman world, when they became thoroughly Romanised. No enrolments, however, took place in newly acquired countries.

Though it cannot be certainly inferred from the wording of Luke i. 1, 2, that the enumeration in Palestine took place at the same time as in Syria (spring, B.C. 8, to spring, B.C. 7), there is great probability that it was so. A good administrator like Augustus would naturally desire to enrol all

the subjects in his dominions during the *same* year, rather than in different years in different districts; as the former method would be far more useful for purposes of reference at any future time.

Although the method of the first enrolment in Palestine differed from the ordinary Roman procedure, it does not at all follow that it also differed from others with regard to the year in which it took place.

The *primâ facie* supposition must be that the enrolments in Syria and Palestine took place in the same year (see also p. 176), and there is no evidence against it.

The usual Roman procedure was for each individual to register wherever he happened to live, and at any time of the given year, whereas at the first enrolment held in Palestine each Jew was ordered to repair to his own city, and a definite time was evidently fixed, as the condition of the Virgin Mother proves that the choice of the date was not left to individuals.

Ramsay informs us that the state of affairs at this time, about B.C. 8 to 6, was as follows: King Herod exercised very great governmental power, though he was of course subordinate to the

Emperor Augustus, the ruling of the country had *not* been assimilated to accord with the more settled portions of the Empire, and in the ordinary course of events it seems probable that no enrolment at all would have taken place in Palestine at that time. However, King Herod had waged war on some neighbouring tribes, without first obtaining the consent of Augustus, who was so angry at this independent action, that he stated he would no longer treat him as a friend, but as a subject.[1] A special envoy was sent to Rome by Herod; although the subject of his despatch is not known, it would seem probable that Augustus insisted on immediate compliance, in order to mark his displeasure and to assert his authority; and that Herod, wishing to retain the Emperor's favour, endeavoured to meet his master's wishes as soon as possible.

Herod doubtless had a very difficult task to perform in carrying out this Roman edict, hence we have a probable explanation of the special methods which he employed for the first Palestinean enrolment—methods which must have been intended to make the new law palatable to the tribal

[1] *Antiquities*, Bk. xvi., Chap. ix., 3, Josephus.

patriotism and to the religious convictions of his turbulent subjects.

As we have seen (p. 159) that the Nativity must have occurred before the end of October, as sheep were then in the open at night, and as the enrolment year began about April, we see that this line of investigation indicates that the Nativity took place between April and October, B.C. 8.

(*f*) *The first Enrolment* (*which fixes the date of the Nativity*) *was between August and October for the sake of convenience.*

Sir William Ramsay states that the day for the enrolment was evidently fixed beforehand by the authorities, who would naturally choose a time which would not interfere with agricultural operations. The harvest and vintage, etc., were not finished until August, the enrolment would therefore be after that date. We have already noticed that the Nativity must have taken place before the end of the hot weather, which finished in October. The operations of ploughing and sowing in the late autumn, and the difficulties of travel over the Judæan hills in winter, would also further prevent the choice of those seasons for the enumeration.

(*g*) *The first Enrolment was at the Feast of Tabernacles, on account of the crowding of the Inn at Bethlehem.*

We remember that all male Hebrews were ordered to be present at Jerusalem three times a year, at the Feasts of the LORD of Passover, Harvest and Tabernacles, at spring, early summer and autumn respectively (Deut. xvi. 16); consequently Jerusalem and its neighbourhood were regularly crowded three times a year, especially at the longer Feasts of Passover and Tabernacles. Bethlehem being only six miles distant must also have been crowded at each feast, and it was accordingly provided with public accommodation for visitors (Luke ii. 7).

The enrolment would not probably bring so many to Bethlehem as the feasts, and as the visitors who came to enter their names belonged to the town, they would be sure to find relatives, with whom many of them would lodge.

Hence it is difficult to see how the inn could have been full under such circumstances alone. But it is quite easy to understand the crowding if we suppose that the enumeration took place on one of the days of the Feast of Tabernacles—which

falls just in the middle of the period indicated by Ramsay. Although other Jews would be enrolling themselves in their own towns on the census day, the feast would certainly bring numbers of non-Jewish tradesmen and others to Bethlehem, in view of the large numbers arriving at Jerusalem for the great feast; it seems probable that the non-Jewish population of Palestine enrolled on any day in the year, according to the usual Roman plan.

We have already concluded that the enrolment day was before August (see p. 171), the Feasts of Passover and Harvest are therefore excluded. Those times are also barred for other reasons: for the Nativity could not have taken place at Passover, as the weather is then cool and sheep are folded at night. Neither could it have been at the Feast of Harvest, for in that case the Magi, who paid their visit at least forty days after the Nativity (for the Purification intervened), could not have arrived before the end of June,—it is hardly likely that a caravan journey from the East would be timed to arrive at so hot a season of the year. Although the Feast of Harvest was one of the three great feasts of the LORD, it was apparently not so important as

Passover and Tabernacles; for instance in Ezekiel (xlv. 21-25) the two greater feasts are alluded to in some detail, but the Feast of Harvest is not mentioned at all; it only lasted a day (Acts ii. 1), and the people were busy at that time of year. Consequently the crowding could not then have been so great at that time, as at the other two longer feasts.

(*h*) *The first Enrolment was on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, to suit the Policy of Herod.*

Herod must naturally have wished the Jews to enrol with willingness. He probably argued thus: "The Jewish men leave home and go to Jerusalem three times a year for religious purposes; if I make the enrolment day to be at one of their festivals, there will not be a fourth interruption of home routine during the year; also the linking of this new edict with one of the great religious feasts will be a great point in its favour, and will tend to make the new law at least acceptable if not popular; the first day of the feast will be the best, as then the Jews will not have opportunity to meet each other beforehand and grumble at my command; having obeyed my order, their atten-

tion will be taken away from it by the subsequent worship at the feast. The joyful Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. xvi. 15) is by far the best one to select, for the people will then have gathered in all the harvest and vintage, and they will be in a contented frame of mind."

As the Feast of Tabernacles lasted for seven days (Deut. xvi. 13), with a solemn assembly on the eighth day, and as attendance at Jerusalem during the whole period was not compulsory (John vii. 8), this arrangement could easily have been made.

The date of the enrolment day was of course also that of the Nativity.

### (*i*) *Enrolment at the Feast of Tabernacles* B.C. 8 *specially suited the Policy of Herod.*

Reference to Fig. VI. informs us that the Feast of Tabernacles B.C. 8 was held a year after the end of the Sabbath year. It was thus the Feast of Ingathering of the first year after that one in which there had been no regular harvest.

We can therefore well understand that in the months before that feast all agricultural operations must have needed more attention than in other

years, as there would be no stores to fall back upon in case of failure of the crop. When all the fruits of the earth had been safely gathered in, the Feast of Tabernacles on this year must have been a specially joyous one.

Evidently the Feast of Tabernacles on the year B.C. 8 specially suited Herod's purpose; thus we have another reason (see pp. 169, 170) to negative the supposition that he delayed the enrolment in Palestine beyond the proper year.

(*j*) *Conclusion that the Nativity occurred on the Feast of Tabernacles* B.C. 8, *probably on the first day.*

The historical line of investigation thus decidedly gives the result that the Nativity took place at the Feast of Tabernacles B.C. 8, probably on the first day.

(F) THE FIRST DAY OF TABERNACLES B.C. 8 SHOULD BE ACCEPTED AS THE DATE OF THE NATIVITY.

We thus find that the three practically independent lines of investigation, which we may designate—

(1) The method of Gospel harmonies (C), p. 140;

(2) The physical method from the Star in the East (D), p. 151;

(3) The historical method (E), p. 161 ;

all agree in indicating the autumn of B.C. 8 as the date of the Nativity, and two of these methods point out the Feast of Tabernacles, and most probably the first day, or the 20th September according to our calendar.

### (*a*) *The Method of Gospel Harmonies has again given Good Results.*

We also notice that once again the results of the application of the system of Gospel harmonies has given results in accordance with other data to which we have access. Later on we shall see in Chapter vii. that these same Scripture harmonies may well have furnished the wise men of the East with good reasons for their journey to find the infant Christ.

### NOTES.

(1) *Confirmation of* B.C. 8 *for the date of the Nativity.*

When the method of figures from things present was first applied in searching for the date of the Nativity, and when B.C. 8 was distinctly indicated by its means, considerable disappointment was experienced, as it was not in agreement with the generally received date of about B.C. 6. Endeavours were therefore made to see if the method of harmonies would give any other indication, but this it refused to do. Search was then made to find out if the generally received

date would give way to agree with B.C. 8. As the scanty records known to the author of this book did not offer any real objection to B.C. 8, he wrote, as a stranger, to the Rev. Professor Sanday, D.D., at Oxford, to ask if any known historical data gave a positive denial to so early a date as B.C. 8 for the Nativity, since a certain line of inference, which he did not describe, consistently pointed to that year. Canon Sanday courteously replied, and he kindly allows his words to be published :—

"I do not think—so far as I can see on the spur of the moment—that there is any insuperable objection to B.C. 8 for the Nativity. Indeed I fancy there would be two points in its favour :—

"(1) That it would probably suit the cycles of census-taking.

"(2) That it would bring the Nativity distinctly under Sentius Saturninus, which would agree with the express statement of Tertullian.

"You will realise that it would spread the events of Matthew i. 18 to ii. 23 over not less than five years."

Reference to Fig. VI. shows that our suppositions spread these events over a period of a little more than five and a quarter years.

Not only has the method of Gospel harmonies pointed out B.C. 8 for the date of the Nativity, but it has led to another practically independent plan for finding that date, which confirms our previous estimate.

The very obvious deduction was soon suggested that the "Star in the East" and the Morning Star were identical, because the method of harmonies pointed out that the latter was shining at the time of the Nativity; and the Morning Star is the most conspicuous and well-known of all the Stars in the Eastern part of the heavens. Accepting this

very reasonable supposition, we have various facts which enable us almost independently to infer that the Magi must have paid their visit at the very end of B.C. 8, and that the Nativity must have been in the autumn of the same year.

### (2) *Christ's Age at the beginning of His Ministry.*

It will be noticed that, if the Nativity were in B.C. 8, Christ's age at the beginning of His ministry must have been thirty-two, if that beginning occurred, as we have supposed (p. 63) in A.D. 25.

In Luke iii. 23 we are told that He was then "about thirty years of age," *not* "began to be about thirty years of age," as translated in the authorised version. Thirty is a round number, and it seems reasonable to suppose that "about thirty" covers an age of thirty-two years.

It appears unlikely that an age between thirty and thirty-one is intended, because when Christ visited the Temple in His boyhood, He was stated by the same evangelist (Luke ii. 42) to be twelve years old. We have seen (p. 173) that it is highly improbable that He was born at a Feast of Passover, consequently He must then have been twelve years and some months of age, yet He is there stated to be "twelve years old" not "about twelve years old". Hence we should expect that the vague expression "about thirty" would describe an age of one or two *years*, not *months* more or less than thirty.

We may perhaps wonder why the exact age was not mentioned by the evangelist; but scholars assure us that often, where a modern would express himself in precise terms, an ancient Greek writer would employ a less harsh and less definite expression.

The taunt "Thou are not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?" (John viii. 57) has been taken by

some ancient writers to imply that the Lord's ministry lasted for ten years or more; there seems, however, not to be the slightest real ground for this supposition. Probably fifty years was mentioned, as that was the age at which Levites were to serve no more (Num. viii. 25), so it may have been taken as the proverbial commencement of old age, when men would begin to have reminiscences exceeding those of the majority of people. If this text bears on our present question at all, the use of the expression points to the probability that at the beginning of His ministry the Lord's age was *greater*, rather than *less*, than thirty years.

We therefore conclude that the Lord's age was thirty-two years when He began His ministry.

### (3) *Harmonies in the Age of Thirty-two Years.*

It has often been said[1] that it was fitting that Christ should begin His ministry at the age of thirty, because at this age Levites entered upon their service (Num. iv. 3, 23), but a *single* harmony must not override the conclusions drawn from a number of inferences.

We must remember, too, that thirty was not the universal age for the beginning of all of the duties of Levites, for some began at twenty-five (Num. viii. 24), and others at twenty years of age (1 Chron. xxiii. 24; Ezra iii. 8), and as a matter of fact there are *several* harmonies connecting the age of thirty-two with the age at which the Levites began their duties.

For, if we add two years, the number connected with witnessing (John viii. 17; Heb. x. 28), to thirty, we have thirty-two.

[1] *The Portable Commentary*, vol. ii., the New Testament, p. 107, Rev. D. Brown, D.D.; and *The Biblical Museum*, p. 41, J. C. Gray.

If we add seven years, the number connected with completeness (Josh. vi. 4; Rev. i. 20), to twenty-five, we again have thirty-two.

If we add twelve years, obtained by combining the earthly number four (Dan. vii. 3) with the three of the Trinity, exemplified in the twelve tribes of Israel, and the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, we again have thirty-two.

These definite additions to the ages at which various classes of Levites might enter on their duties all total to an age when a Worker might be said to be well-matured.

If therefore any weight is to be given to harmonies referring to Levites in determining the age of the Lord at the beginning of His ministry, it is clear that the age of thirty has no advantage over that of thirty-two.

# THE MANIFESTATION TO THE GENTILES.

As with gladness men of old
Did the guiding Star behold;
As with joy they hail'd its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to Thee.

As with joyful steps they sped,
Saviour, to Thy lowly bed,
There to bend the knee before
Him whom heaven and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet
Ever seek the mercy-seat.

As they offer'd gifts most rare
At Thy cradle rude and bare;
So may we with holy joy,
Pure, and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee, our heavenly King.

Holy Jesus, every day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransom'd souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds Thy glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright
Need they no created light;
Thou, its Light, its Joy, its Crown,
Thou, its Sun which goes not down;
There for ever may we sing
Hallelujahs to our King.

—*W. C. Dix.*

# CHAPTER V.

## EARLY GOSPEL EVENTS.

(A) DATES OF OTHER EARLY EVENTS IN THE GOSPELS DEPENDENT ON THAT OF THE NATIVITY.

(*a*) *Announcement to Zacharias.*
(*b*) *Annunciation to Mary.*
(*c*) *Prenatal Witness of John.*
(*d*) *Birth of John.*
(*e*) *The Nativity.*
(*f*) *The Purification.*
(*g*) *The Visit of the Magi.*
(*h*) *Departure to Egypt.*
(*i*) *Murder of the Infants.*
(*j*) *Death of Herod.*
(*k*) *Return from Egypt.*
(*l*) *Christ's Visit to Jerusalem at the age of twelve.* "*My Father's Business.*"
(*m*) *Death of Judas of Galilee.*
(*n*) *The Feast of John* v. 1. "*My Father worketh.*"

(B) CONCLUSION, THAT THE SYSTEM OF HARMONIES FURNISHES DATES FOR THE EARLY EVENTS IN GOSPEL HISTORY.

## (A) DATES OF OTHER EARLY EVENTS IN THE GOSPELS DEPENDENT ON THAT OF THE NATIVITY.

In endeavouring to fix the date of the Nativity we have already referred to some of the early events in Gospel history, which we shall now proceed to examine in fuller detail. These dates readily fall into their places, as most of them depend directly on that of the birth of Christ.

Assuming therefore some day near the Autumnal Equinox B.C. 8 as the date of the Nativity, we now examine the narrative of the events recorded in the Gospels and we refer to Fig. VI.

### (*a*) *Announcement to Zacharias.*

The announcement to Zacharias by the angel, that his son John should be born and that "many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God, and he shall go before His face in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke i. 16, 17), referred to the prophecies in Malachi iii. 1 and iv. 2, 5, 6, and thus early notice was given of the future important heralding duties of the yet unborn prophet under the figure of the Morning Star. This announcement must have been given about

or just after midsummer B.C. 9, for it was five to six months before the annunciation to the Virgin Mary (Luke i. 24-26), which was some forty weeks or nine and a half lunar months before the Nativity. Thus it is seen that the announcement of John's birth was in the Sabbath year, while the birth itself occurred in the following one; it seems fitting that the prophet, who may be said to be the link between the two dispensations, should have been announced on the Sabbath year, which spoke of the old covenant, and that his birth took place on the first one of the new week of years, which may be said to have prefigured the new dispensation. As neither the Baptist nor his Master were yet born, we notice that, appropriately, no Morning Star was shining. See Fig. VI.

(*b*) *Annunciation to Mary.*

The Apostle Paul warns the Colossians (Col. ii. 16, 17) "with regard to a festival, a new Moon, or a Sabbath; which were a shadow of things that were soon to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (*W. T.*).

We have seen how the feasts and Sabbaths were shadows, for the Feast of Passover refers to

Christ our Passover (1 Cor. v. 7), that of Harvest to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts ii. 1, 2), and we shall endeavour to show (pp. 219, 220) that the Feast of Tabernacles refers to Christ's comings. The Sabbath speaks of the Rest which remains for the people of God (Heb. iv. 9), and Christ applied the title of "Lord of the Sabbath" to Himself (Matt. xii. 8).

But in what way can a new Moon, which was observed as a holy day resembling the Sabbath (for burnt-offerings were offered (Neh. x. 33), and the sale of food was prohibited on each (Amos viii. 5)), be said to be a shadow of things to come or of Christ? Is there any reply from Scripture?

The Annunciation was forty weeks or 280 days before the Nativity; 280 days contain nine complete lunations and fourteen and a half days over. Counting backwards from the Nativity, which we have concluded was on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, 20th September, B.C. 8, or the fifteenth day of the seventh month, it is easy to see that 280 days conducts us to about the middle of December or to the first day of the ninth month of the previous year B.C. 9—a new Moon.

The Annunciation may therefore well have been on the holy day of a new Moon.

Later on (p. 232) we shall see that the Baptism of Christ was also very probably at a new Moon. That these harmonies should exist is in accordance with what we may expect, for we are told at the very beginning of Scripture (Gen. i. 14) that the lights in the firmament of the heaven are to be for "signs" as well as for "seasons, and for days, and years".

As the Annunciation was in December it was *not* the time of year for most flowers, consequently the conventional and symbolic white lily often represented in pictures of the event could not really have been in Mary's hand at the time.

On the other hand, December is the season of the year for sowing in Palestine; reference to Fig. VI. informs us that December, B.C. 9, was a specially important time of sowing, the first after the cessation on the Sabbath year (Lev. xxv. 22), when the ground, undisturbed for two years, may be said to have almost reverted to the condition of virgin soil.

Hence a pictorial representation of the Annunciation would more fittingly contain a figure of a

sower engaged in his work as the evening sky first revealed the thin faint crescent of the new Moon, which marked the beginning of the Hebrew day and of the Hebrew month.

The wondrous Divine beginning on the first year of a week of years would then be represented as figured in the heavens by the new Moon and on earth unconsciously by the sower—each signifying a new beginning.

It is interesting to note the parallel with the time in Christ's ministry thirty-five years (or five weeks of years) later, just at the beginning of another week of years, when He took advantage of the fact that sowing had been newly resumed after the cessation on the Sabbath year to inculcate His teaching of a new beginning to the Gentiles when He gave His parables on sowing (see p. 117).

If we are right in considering that the appearance of the Moon was for a sign, may there not be a fitness in the fact that Christ was born, as we have concluded (see p. 143), and also that He died, at a full moon? For we read, "when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them which were under the law" (Gal. iv. 4, 5). We shall give inferences for supposing that the first manifestation of Christ's glory (John ii. 11), p. 220, His first public assertion of Himself (Luke iv. 16-19), p. 109, the first time when great blessing to the Gentiles was proclaimed through Christ (Matt. xii. 18-21, 50), p. 116, and the Transfiguration (Matt.

xvii. 2), p. 221, also took place on or about the first day of the same feast and consequently at or about full moon. A certain fulness of time had come on each occasion.

The Morning Star was fittingly not visible at the Annunciation. See Fig. VI.

### (*c*) *Prenatal Witness of John.*

The strange prenatal witness of John (Luke i. 41, 44) came within a few days of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary. As the Baptist was still unborn, it was appropriate that the Morning Star should not yet be shining, but that it should be about to appear shortly, and we see that this actually was the case on reference to Fig. VI.

### (*d*) *Birth of John.*

John's birth (Luke i. 57) must have been during the month immediately following the Passover, as he was born five to six months before the Lord (Luke i. 24-26). (Six lunar months elapse between the Feast of Passover and Tabernacles, which latter feast included the Nativity according to our estimates.) John was accordingly born at about the same season of the year as that at which he died, since we know that his

death was close to Passover A.D. 28, when the miracle of feeding the five thousand took place (Matt. xiv. 10, 14-21; John vi. 4-13), times of scarcity just before harvests, intensified on each occasion, B.C. 8 and A.D. 28, by the fact that it was just after a Sabbath year. See Figs. IV. (*g*) and VI. (*d*).

These were evidently very appropriate and significant occasions for both the birth and death of the ascetic prophet who was said to come "neither eating nor drinking" (Matt. xi. 18). The Baptist's life was just contained within five weeks of years, and he was literally taken away in the midst of his days (Ps. xc. 10, cii. 24).

The reference of the angel (Luke i. 17) some months before to the Baptist as one who "shall go before" the face of the Lord (Mal. iii. 1) had evidently made a deep impression on Zacharias, since we find that at the circumcision of his son he again refers to the same scripture (Luke i. 76); and he makes it perfectly plain, as we have previously noticed, that the figure of the Morning Star is implied, because in the same sentence (verse 78) he speaks of the coming Christ as "the Day-spring" (or Sunrising) "who shall visit us".

As we have already noticed (p. 142), the Morning Star, the herald in the sky, was appropriately shining when the human herald was born. See Fig. VI.

(*e*) *The Nativity.*

The harmony caused by the birth of the Lord at a Feast of Tabernacles is greatly increased, as we have already noticed (p. 151), by the fact of its occurrence at one which was twelve months after the end of a Sabbath year, as that must have been a specially joyful time, when all the fruits of the earth had been safely gathered and stored, just after the period of hardship and want in the months immediately preceding the harvest. The contrast drawn between the characters of John and Christ —"John came neither eating nor drinking. . . . The Son of Man came eating and drinking" (Matt. xi. 18, 19)—is parallel with the contrast between the conditions of the times at their respective births, for John, being five to six months older than Christ, was born at the time of want just before the much-needed harvest on the first year after the Sabbath.

We may notice a harmony between the births of John and of Christ and between the beginnings of their ministries—for John was born, as we have

seen, in the month after Passover B.C. 8, and he began his ministry at about the same season, A.D. 25 (see pp. 60, 63, and Fig. IV.). Christ was born at the Feast of Tabernacles B.C. 8, and we shall infer (see p. 218) that He was publicly manifested, and that He began His ministry at that feast, A.D. 25. See Fig. VI.

At first sight it may look as if John began his ministry later in the year than the anniversary of his birth, which we have concluded took place at a time of want before harvest. When he began his ministry his figures of speech refer to fruit-bearing, marking useless trees for cutting down, and also to threshing (Matt. iii. 8, 10, 12). However, we remember that John began to preach[1] "in all the region round about Jordan" (Luke iii. 3)—a deep natural depression in the earth where the harvest is naturally early, because the climate is subtropical; but the Baptist was born in the bleak hill country of Judæa (Luke i. 39, 57, 65), where all crops are much later. Passover A.D. 25, according to the Jewish calendar, fell about a week later in the season than in B.C. 8. Consequently it is highly

[1] *The Crit. and Ex. Bible Cyclopædia*, p. 393, Rev. Canon A. R. Fausset, D.D.

probable that the Baptist began both his life and his ministry in the first month after Passover.

Another harmony now appears from the fact that, as the births of both the Baptist and of Christ were included within the period of one shining of the Morning Star (which we have indicated as No. 1), beginning about the vernal equinox, B.C. 8; so the beginnings of both ministries were included in a No. 1 shining of the Morning Star, which, in A.D. 25, also commenced at about the vernal equinox. See Figs. IV. and VI.

### (*f*) *The Purification.*

The infant Christ was brought to the Temple at Jerusalem at the Purification (Luke ii. 22)—forty days after the Nativity (Lev. xii. 2-4)—when devout Simeon and godly Anna worshipped and gave thanks. The former (Luke ii. 32) stated that Christ was "a Light for revelation to the Gentiles" —an appropriate intimation of the coming visit of the Magi from the East.

The words "a Light for revelation to the Gentiles" are apparently derived from several which appear in the writings of the prophet Isaiah; thus in Isaiah ix. 2 we have, "The people that

walked in darkness have seen a great Light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death (or deep darkness), upon them hath the Light shined". From Job xxiv. 17 and Amos v. 8 it is evident that the expression "shadow of death" is another name for "the night"; hence in Isaiah ix. 2 the Light intended must be the Sun.

In Isaiah xlix. 6 (see also Acts xiii. 47) "a Light to the Gentiles" is associated with salvation which reaches to the end of the earth; and as the light of the sun reaches to the end of the earth more efficiently than any other, it seems evident that the Light in this case also means the Sun.

In Isaiah lx. 2, 3, "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, . . . nations shall come to Thy Light and kings to the brightness of Thy rising," the figure of the rising Sun is again evidently employed.

Though there is no actual reference to the Sun in Isaiah xlii. 6, "a Light of the Gentiles," it is consistent to assume that the same figure is again employed.

Hence we find, carrying on the symbolical language of the prophet Isaiah, that Christ is spoken

of thus early in His life under the figure of the Sun. We have previously noticed that John the Baptist was spoken of under the figure of the Morning Star, before his birth (Luke i. 16, 17) and also just after his birth (Luke i. 76), and on the later occasion the Lord Jesus was referred to as the coming Sun, carrying on the similes previously used in Malachi iii. 1, iv. 2—so consistent and persistent are the figures of Christ and the Baptist to the Sun and to the Morning Star respectively in so many different parts of Scripture!

The heralding Star was still visible in the early morning sky at the Purification. See Fig. VI.

### (*g*) *The Visit of the Magi.*

The visit of the Magi (Matt. ii. 11), as we have noticed (p. 157), most probably took place towards the very end of the period of the shining of the Morning Star.

On reference to Fig. VI. we find, from the conclusion we have arrived at, that the visit of the Magi was about the latter part of December, B.C. 8. Thus at the age of three months the Lord escaped death at the hands of a cruel king, who had

ordered the destruction of all infant boys in His neighbourhood; reminding us of Moses who escaped an exactly similar fate at just the same age (Exod. i. 16, ii. 2, 3, 6).

Many artists[1] have given instances of a careless rendering of Scripture by introducing an ox and an ass quite close to the child Jesus and His mother in their pictures of the adoration of the Magi. A little thought would show that the crowding which occurred at the inn at the time of the Nativity was not likely to continue until the end of the forty days when Purification was made, and reference to the text of Matthew ii. 11 tells us that the Magi went into the *house;* there is no longer any mention of the *manger,* where the shepherds had found Him (Luke ii. 16) several weeks before.

In his well-known hymn, referring to the visit of the Magi:—

> Brightest and best of the Sons of the morning,
> . . . Star of the East, the horizon adorning,
> Guide where our Infant Redeemer is laid—

[1] See for instance some (not all) pictures of this subject in the National Gallery: No. 1843, by Benedetti Bonfigli, Umbrian School; No. 1160, by Georgio Barbarelli, Venetian School; No. 268, by Paolo Veronese, Venetian School; and also two copies of other pictures exhibited in the basement.

Bishop Heber was therefore hardly accurate in the subsequent line:—

> Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall.

### (*h*) *Departure to Egypt.*

The departure into Egypt (Matt. ii. 13, 14) took place immediately after the wise men left, and very appropriately at a time when the Morning Star was just disappearing, since we concluded, from the Magi's reply to Herod and his consequent action (see p. 157), that the Star had almost reached the end of its period of shining.

### (*i*) *Murder of the Infants.*

The murder of the infants in Bethlehem (Matt. ii. 16) took place at once, just after the departure of the Holy Family into Egypt, some three months after the Nativity; it is interesting to note that it is now commemorated as a church festival three *days* after Christmas Day—a wrong interval of time after a wrong date, and yet it may occasionally happen that the day observed may be correct when Tabernacles falls, as it sometimes does, on one of the last days of September, after which an interval of three months will lead to 28th December.

### (*j*) *Death of Herod.*

According to reliable historical data already referred to (p. 163), the death of Herod (Matt. ii. 19) took place just before Passover B.C. 4.

It has been imagined[1] that Herod died very shortly after the murder of the Innocents, but there is no confirmation of this supposition. Our inferences on the contrary point to an interval of about three and a quarter years between the two events (see Fig. VI.), and no evidence can be brought to contradict this estimate.

### (*k*) *Return from Egypt.*

The narrative seems to imply that the return from Egypt did not take place immediately after the death of Herod (Matt. ii. 15); probably the situation did not alter suddenly; others beside Herod had sought the young Child's life, and it was not until *they* were dead (Matt. ii. 20) that the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream warning him, so that he went to Nazareth in Galilee (Matt. ii. 22, 23).

We are not told at which time of year the return took place; at first sight the Feast of Tabernacles

[1] *The Life of Christ*, Chap. iv., p. 24, Dean Farrar.

might appear to be suitable, as we have concluded that was the time of year both of Christ's entry into this world and we shall show on p. 218 that it was also probably the season at which He entered His ministry. But as we find no manifestation of joy whatever at His return, but on the contrary only fear of Archelaus (Matt. ii. 22), that joyful season of the year seems unfitting, especially as no Morning Star was then shining (autumn, B.C. 4) to herald His return.

But if we suppose that the Holy Family came back at about the following Feast of Passover, the conditions appear to be more fitting; the Morning Star was then shining (see Fig. VI.) and we have the harmony that the *nation* of Israel left Egypt at the same feast (Exod. xii. 2, 37).

That there *is* a harmony between the two departures from Egypt is shown by the fact that the LORD sent a message to Pharaoh in these words, "Israel is My Son, My first-born" (Exod. iv. 22), and the prophet Hosea wrote (xi. 1), "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt,"—words which certainly applied historically to the nation in the first instance, but which were afterwards quoted (Matt. ii. 15)

in reference to the return of Christ from the same country.

St. Matthew does not tell us how long the exile of the Holy Family in Egypt continued; ancient legends say they remained absent from Palestine for two years,[1] but our inferences point to an absence of about four and a quarter years. See Fig. VI.

### (*l*) *Christ's Visit to Jerusalem at the age of twelve. "My Father's Business."*

The visit of Christ to the Temple at Jerusalem at the age of twelve years (Luke ii. 41-51) is the only recorded incident of His boyhood, and it took place at Passover A.D. 6, as this was the first Passover after He was twelve years of age, supposing the Nativity to have been at Tabernacles B.C. 8.[2] Fig. VI. informs us that this Passover was just twelve months before the beginning of the enrolment year, A.D. 7-8, when the enumeration was first carried out in Judæa in the regular

[1] *The Life of Christ*, p. 20, Dean Farrar.

[2] It must be remembered that in calculating periods from B.C. to A.D. it is necessary to cast out one year; thus Passover B.C. 7 is six and three-quarter years before the beginning of the year A.D. 1, and Passover A.D. 6 is five and a quarter years afterwards (see Fig. VI.).

Roman fashion, when the people were *not* sent to their own cities on any particular day, but were enrolled wherever they happened to be and at any time they wished during the year. As already mentioned, we know from Josephus and also from Acts v. 37 that the carrying out of this command produced riot and bloodshed. We can therefore well understand that the crowds which assembled at Jerusalem at Passover A.D. 6 would be excited about the prospect of the well-known coming great event of the next year; particularly as they must have remembered that the late King Herod had doubtless taken advantage of the information gained at the former enrolment, B.C. 8 (carried out in a manner intended to appease Jewish susceptibilities), in order to verify the ages of infants, and thus ensure their murder at Bethlehem, which is only some six miles distant from Jerusalem (Luke ii. 1-3; Matt. ii. 16-18).

Under these circumstances it is easy to imagine that Mary and Joseph might have been absorbed in discussing the coming troubles with their friends; and so they may have lost sight of the Lord Jesus more readily than would have been the case in a quieter and less disturbed year.

(*m*) *Death of Judas of Galilee.*

Judas of Galilee (Acts v. 37) perished at *the* enrolment, which Josephus tells us was held A.D. 7-8; doubtless like his predecessor Theudas he gave himself out to be somebody, and he probably took advantage of the general Messianic expectation and of the burning desire for national freedom to raise the standard of rebellion; it is possible also that he may have appealed to the fact that the Morning Star was shining at the Feast of Tabernacles on that year (see Fig. VI.) as a confirmation of his claims, although the planet had then only recently appeared as Herald of dawn.

(*n*) *The Feast of John* v. 1. "*My Father worketh.*"

If the unnamed feast of John v. 1 were the Passover, as is supposed by many, there are several striking parallels between Christ's visit to Jerusalem in that year, A.D. 27, and His visit in His boyhood, A.D. 6, for see (*l*) and (*n*), Fig. VI.

(1) Both were at a Passover in a Sabbath year.

(2) Both were towards the middle of a period of shining of the Morning Star.

(3) On the earlier occasion, just after the Passover, Christ uttered the words, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke ii. 49, margin), and at the later year, soon after the feast, He said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work" (John v. 17)—words which represented a salient feature in His ministry, characteristic of the authoritative assertions of His Divinity, which He so frequently made in the Sabbath year (see p. 125). These assertions brought about a crisis, as they evoked the deadly opposition of His enemies. Both of these two statements of Christ (in the years A.D. 6 and A.D. 27) may be said to summarise the object of His incarnation—"To do Thy will, O God" (Heb. x. 7).

We may note incidentally (see Fig. VI.) that the three Sabbath years B.C. 10-9, A.D. 5-6, 26-27, connected with important events in the life of Christ, were each marked out by containing a nearly complete period of the shining of the Morning Star; whilst the other Sabbath years included in His life, B.C. 3-2, A.D. 12-13, 19-20, of which no events are recorded, each contain a lesser part of the period of the shining of the same Star.

## (B) CONCLUSION, THAT THE SYSTEM OF HARMONIES FURNISHES DATES FOR THE EARLY EVENTS IN GOSPEL HISTORY.

The seven years' cycle of the Sabbath years and the eight years' cycle of the Morning Star, aided by the fourteen years' cycle of the Roman enrolments, thus enable us to date the early events of Gospel history with considerable probability of accuracy.

We find the same harmonies consistently running through these earlier and more scattered events as in the more continuous and shorter period of the Lord's Ministry in later years ; hence we have a further confirmation of the reliance to be placed upon this system of investigation.

# THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

O Lord, when we the path retrace
Which Thou on earth hast trod,
To man Thy wondrous love and grace,
Thy faithfulness to God.

Thy love, to man so sorely tried,
Proved stronger than the grave;
The very spear that pierced Thy side
Drew forth the blood to save.

Faithful amidst unfaithfulness,
Midst darkness only light,
Thou didst Thy Father's name confess,
And in His will delight.

Unmoved by Satan's subtle wiles,
By suffering, shame, or loss;
Thy path uncheered by earthly smiles
Led only to the cross.

. . . . . .

Give us Thy meek, Thy lowly mind;
We would obedient be;
And all our rest and pleasure find
In fellowship with Thee.

—*Deck.*

# CHAPTER VI.

## THE LENGTH OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY.

(A) DIFFERENT ESTIMATES OF THE LENGTH OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY.

(*a*) *Reliable Methods of finding it.*

(B) HISTORICAL DATA TO DETERMINE THE LENGTH OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY.

(C) HARMONIES CONNECTED WITH THE MORNING STAR DECIDEDLY INDICATE A THREE AND A HALF YEARS' MINISTRY.

(D) HARMONIES CONNECTED WITH THE SABBATH YEAR FAVOUR A THREE AND A HALF YEARS' MINISTRY.

(E) THERE WERE PROBABLY FOUR FEASTS OF TABERNACLES IN THE LORD'S MINISTRY.

(*a*) *The Ministry began at a Feast of Tabernacles.*

(*b*) *The Transfiguration was at a Feast of Tabernacles, probably on the first day.*

(*c*) *Two intermediate Feasts of Tabernacles.*

(F) HARMONIES CONNECTED WITH THE BAPTISM INDICATE A THREE AND A HALF YEARS' MINISTRY.

(*a*) *A New Moon at the Baptism.*

(*b*) *The Baptism in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles.*

(G) OTHER HARMONIES POINTING TO A THREE AND A HALF YEARS' MINISTRY.

(*a*) *With respect to Age.*

(*b*) *With regard to the Morning Star at the Nativity and at the beginning of Christ's Ministry.*

(*c*) *With regard to the Early Passover and the Feast in John* v. 1.

(*d*) *With regard to the Period of Three and a Half Years—the half of a Week of Years.*

(H) CONCLUSION THAT CHRIST'S MINISTRY LASTED FOR THREE AND A HALF YEARS.

(I) SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY.

(*a*) "*In the midst of My Days.*"

(J) THE ASCENSION.

## (A) DIFFERENT ESTIMATES OF THE LENGTH OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY.

STUDENTS of the writings of the Fathers have found that there was a general opinion among many of them that the Ministry of Christ only lasted between two and three years, and consequently some modern writers[1] have accepted that estimate. It is only right, however, to remember that tradition and the estimates of the Fathers have proved very untrustworthy guides in other cases of chronology; for instance, in the case of the

[1] Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, *Chronology of the Gospels*, C. H. Turner, M.A., also *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, Rev. Canon W. Sanday, D.D.

year and also with respect to the month of the Nativity. Chronological matters were but little thought of in the very early times, just immediately after the Gospels were written.

### (*a*) *Reliable Methods of finding the length of Christ's Ministry.*

The only reliable methods of finding the length of Christ's Ministry are to compare any references in the sacred text with well-dated historical facts, and also to look carefully at any internal evidences or inferences which may bear on the question. If these methods unite in giving a decided preference for one estimate of the length of Christ's Ministry, the opinion of any number of the Fathers must be disregarded as unreliable, if it favours any other view.

As we have already mentioned, A.D. 29 is the now generally received date for the Crucifixion, and this date appears to be accepted by those who hold different estimates of the length of the Lord's Ministry. We have also seen that the harmonies which we have considered all point to this same year for the Crucifixion on the supposition of a three to four years' Ministry.

If we suppose a shorter Ministry of two to three years; harmonies connected with the Morning Star (*e*) to (*k*) of Fig. IV. are all fulfilled with the same date for the Crucifixion, but there are failures for any other year historically possible, as may easily be seen by reference to Fig. IV.; and the references to the Sabbath year in the Gospels are manifestly only fulfilled by the same date. We therefore conclude that A.D. 29 for the date of the Crucifixion is the only one we need consider, whether the Ministry lasted for three years and some months, or for two years and some months.

## (B) HISTORICAL DATA TO DETERMINE THE LENGTH OF CHRIST'S MINISTRY.

Professor Sir William Ramsay[1] gives historical reasons for dating the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar (Luke iii. 1), when John began his ministry, as most probably A.D. 25. Since John and Christ both began their public work before the same winter—for the former spoke of harvest time, the latter of sitting under a fig tree, which points to the probability of leaves—it follows that Christ

[1] *Was Christ born at Bethlehem?* pp. 212, 221, 224, W. M Ramsay, M.A., D.C.L.

must also have begun His testimony in the same year.

At the first Passover in Christ's ministry, the Jews stated that Herod's temple had been forty and six years in building (John ii. 20); Ramsay tells us that this would indicate the date of that Passover as A.D. 26.

Assuming, as we have done, A.D. 29 for the date of the Crucifixion, we find that both of these historical references agree in demanding that the length of the Lord's Ministry must have been more than three years.

### (C) HARMONIES CONNECTED WITH THE MORNING STAR DECIDEDLY INDICATE A THREE AND A HALF YEARS' MINISTRY.

Let us now proceed to inquire what length of Ministry we should deduce from the internal harmonies connected with the simile of John the Baptist to the Morning Star, and from the references to the Sabbath year in the Gospels.

We may begin by noting that we do not get such full answers as we might expect, because both estimates agree generally in the chronology of the last two years; the one supposition assigns about a

year and a half to the initial part of the Lord's Ministry, while the other would compress that period to some three months or so. It is consequently only in the initial time that any different results will be furnished by the two suppositions, and the number of events which we consider for our purposes during that period happens to be few. We shall, however, examine what there are.

We shall now, for the moment, assume a Ministry between two and three years in length, and see if we can obtain satisfactory harmonies. We refer to Fig. IV. and we notice that, if the ministries of the forerunner and of Christ both began during the same period of the shining of the Morning Star, as we have supposed is suitable and fitting (see p. 142), the Baptist could not have begun earlier than about the end of October, A.D. 26, for the Morning Star did not begin its shining till that time (see Figs. IV. and VI.). Supposing (which of course is not likely) that Christ was baptised near the very beginning of John's ministry, the forty days' temptation would not have concluded until the very end of December, A.D. 26. Consequently Christ could not have been publicly proclaimed (John i. 29, 36) before the beginning

of A.D. 27. Nor could He have been proclaimed later than the beginning of the following March, for both the marriage in Cana of Galilee and the short abiding in Capernaum (John ii. 12) came before the following Passover, A.D. 27.

Under these circumstances we notice with regard to (*a*) Fig. IV.:—

That as John is now supposed to have begun his testimony not earlier than the end of October, his three references to harvest in Matthew iii. 8, 10, 12, lose the harmony which they possessed under the suppositions of the longer Ministry, which involved that it was actually harvest-time when the similes were uttered.

With regard to (*b*) Fig. IV.:—

The supposition of the shorter Ministry necessitates that the coming of Andrew and Peter to Christ took place in the month of January or February or perhaps in the very beginning of March, A.D. 27—a most unlikely time of year for Nathaniel to be under the fig-tree (John i. 48), as it has no leaves in winter.

With regard to (*c*) Fig. IV.:—

On the supposition of the shorter Ministry the words "He must increase, but I must decrease"

(John iii. 30) were uttered soon after Passover A.D. 27, when the Morning Star was shining. The harmony in this case is only satisfied by supposing the increase to refer to the daily increase of the Sun's light at dawn, when it decreases the light of the Morning Star; but we concluded on p. 65 that this was not a satisfactory explanation.

With regard to (*d*) Fig. IV. :—

The imprisonment of John took place just after the last utterance; on the supposition of the shorter Ministry the Morning Star was then shining—certainly a want of harmony.

After this point the two suppositions agree generally in their chronologies.

Thus we see that, in the four instances where the chronology differs under the two suppositions of length of Ministry, there are at least three failures in harmony in the shorter one, while we saw in Chapter ii. that there are no failures under the longer supposition. Thus although the number of instances to be considered is small, the inference to be drawn is decidedly in favour of the longer Ministry.

## (D) HARMONIES CONNECTED WITH THE SABBATH YEAR FAVOUR A THREE AND A HALF YEARS' MINISTRY.

There are apparently only two references to the Sabbath year in the early part of the Lord's Ministry when the chronologies of the two lengths differ.

With regard to (*a*) and (*b*) Fig. V.:—

On the supposition of the shorter Ministry the reading by Christ in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke iv. 16-19), and the words quoted by the Evangelist (Matt. iv. 15, 16), could not have had reference, as we had previously supposed, to the beginning of the Sabbath year, because we have already seen (p. 214) that the supposed shorter Ministry of Christ could not have begun till about January, A.D. 27, when some four months of the Sabbath year had already passed away. It scarcely seems harmonious that the seventh, the acceptable year of the Lord, should have been thus curtailed. On the other hand if, as seems probable, as shown on p. 279 (Appendix), the intercalary month was added before Passover A.D. 27, the Sabbath year was not only contained entire on the

supposition of the longer Ministry, but the further harmony is presented that it was lengthened out.

Hence the inferences from the Sabbath year, few though they are, also favour the longer period of Ministry. As we proceed we shall find other harmonies, which also support the supposition of the longer Ministry, but which fail when applied to the shorter one.

## (E) THERE WERE PROBABLY FOUR FEASTS OF TABERNACLES IN THE LORD'S MINISTRY.

Three Passovers are distinctly mentioned in the Gospel of John (ii. 23, vi. 4, xiii. 1); and if we assume the unnamed feast of John v. 1 to be also a Passover, we have a total of four, which would of course necessitate a Ministry longer than three years; but though this is very probable, it cannot be certainly inferred from the wording of John v. 1.

Four Feasts of Tabernacles and consequently a Ministry of over three years may be inferred from the following considerations :—

(*a*) *The Ministry began at a Feast of Tabernacles.*

On the supposition of a three to four years' Ministry we have already shown that the public testimony began (John ii. 1-11) after August and

before November (see p. 61). A little further search reveals the fact that this beginning probably took place at the Feast of Tabernacles. For if we examine the expression used a very few days before by John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John i. 29), and the repetition of the first part of the sentence on the day following (John i. 36), we are reminded of the two goats on the day of Atonement. On the tenth day of the seventh month, Aaron took two he-goats, offered one for a sin offering and took the other one alive, laid both his hands on his head, confessed over him all the transgressions of the people, even all their sins, and sent him away, bearing all Israel's iniquity for Azazel (dismissal), by the hand of a fit person into the wilderness, into a solitary place, where the goat was released (Lev. xvi. 5-30).

May we not see a reference to Christ under the figure of the two goats—the Baptist speaking of Him as the scapegoat on one day and as the sin offering on the morrow? It is true John spoke of Christ as the *Lamb* of God; but as the Paschal lamb was to be taken from the sheep *or* from the goats (Exod. xii. 5), it would appear that an allusion

to Christ under the simile of these two goats may well have been made by the Baptist.

If we follow the plan of supposing that illustrative language was used, when the event on which it was founded was actually occurring, we may conclude that the ceremonial connected with the day of Atonement was just taking place when John spoke, and that consequently the Feast of Tabernacles, which began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Lev. xxiii. 33, 34), was close at hand.

If this were so, the joyful marriage of Cana in Galilee a few days afterwards would have been harmoniously at the glad Feast of Tabernacles. We are told with reference to the first miracle which Christ then performed, "this beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory" (John ii. 11).

We therefore date the beginning of Christ's Ministry from this event.

The marriage feast in Cana may point to the future joyful marriage of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 7), when the Tabernacle of God is with men (Rev. xxi. 2, 3), when Christ will again drink of the fruit of the vine, as at Cana (Matt. xxvi. 29; Luke xxii. 18).

There is to be a future glorious keeping of this feast at Jerusalem (*Zech.* xiv. 16), and Tabernacles is also typical of the future day of great joy in store for the Christian (1 Peter iv. 13). This feast has been thought to prefigure the millennial reign of Christ.[1]

Edersheim,[2] writing of the Feast of Tabernacles, says: "It is remarkable how many allusions to this feast occur in the writings of the prophets as if its types were the goal of all their desires".

(*b*) *The Transfiguration was at a Feast of Tabernacles, probably on the first day.*

As the words "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" when first uttered from heaven were spoken of Christ at a time when He was soon to begin His public Ministry at a Feast of Tabernacles, it seems reasonable to suppose that when the very same phrase was again uttered in the same miraculous manner at the Transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 5; Mark ix. 7; Luke ix. 35), it was at the recurrence of the same feast.

This idea is strengthened by the words of Peter: "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us

[1] *The Study of the Types*, p. 73, A. Habershon.
[2] *The Temple*, etc., note on p. 272, A. Edersheim.

make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Luke ix. 33). He knew not indeed what he said in wishing to give equal honour to each; but *some* train of thought must have been running through his mind, and if the Feast of Tabernacles were at hand he might naturally have thought of honouring each by making a tabernacle for each.

It is interesting to notice that when the Apostle Peter refers to the Transfiguration in his second epistle (i. 17, 18), he had just previously twice used the figure of a tabernacle in reference to his own body (2 Peter i. 13, 14).

Hence we conclude that the folly of Peter's remark at the Transfiguration lay in his failure to understand that Christ ought to receive infinitely more honour than either Moses or Elias; but in his riper years, when he recounts that transcendent event in his second epistle (2 Peter i. 17), the Apostle pointedly omits any mention whatever of these two representative men.

A reference to tabernacles at the Transfiguration was not in itself foolish or wrong; had it been so the Apostle would naturally have avoided any reference to the same figure at the beginning of his description of the glorious vision in his

epistle. He seems to rejoice to recall the actual phraseology used at the Transfiguration, for besides twice using the special word "tabernacle" he also speaks of his own death as his "exodus" (2 Peter i. 15)—the very word which is used in the gospel account (Luke ix. 31) of the Transfiguration with reference to the death and departure of Christ Himself.

We may briefly notice points of resemblance in the circumstances attending the utterances of the words "This is My beloved Son" at the Baptism, and at the Transfiguration.

| Baptism. | Transfiguration. |
| --- | --- |
| (1) "Jesus . . . having been baptised and praying" (Luke iii. 21). | (1) "As He was praying, the fashion of His countenance was altered" (Luke ix. 29). |
| (2) "The heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him" (Matt. iii. 16). | (2) "His raiment became white and dazzling . . . they saw His glory . . . then came a cloud, and overshadowed them; and they feared as they entered into the cloud" (Luke ix. 29, 32, 34). |

| | |
|---|---|
| (3) "A voice out of the heavens, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 17). | (3) "A voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Matt. xvii. 5). |
| (4) "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. iv. 1). | (4) "Jesus said . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do" (John viii. 42, 44). (These words were spoken at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles (John vii. 2, viii. 2), and very probably soon after the Transfiguration, see p. 226.) |
| (5) Consecration to Service as Prophet or Teacher (Deut. xviii. 15). | (5) Consecration as Priest about to sacrifice Himself (Heb. ix. 26). His coming death was constantly before Christ from about this time and onward (Matt. xvi. 21; |

Luke ix. 31; Mark ix. 9; Matt. xvii. 12; Mark x. 33, etc.).

If these consecrations as Prophet and Priest each took place at the Feast of Tabernacles, it suggests the thought that the manifestation of Christ as King in the future may also be associated with the same feast. "The Jews connect this Festival with the future restoration of their Nation."[1]

Although the exact time of year of the Transfiguration is not given in the Gospels, the context fully allows that it may have been at the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles; for the glorious vision was after Passover, A.D. 28 (compare Matt. xiv. 14-21; John vi. 4-13 with Matt. xvii. 2), but before the visit to the borders of Judæa beyond Jordan (Matt. xix. 1; John x. 40), which was probably about the beginning of January, A.D. 29 (see p. 54). The Feast of Tabernacles, A.D. 28, falls within this period.

Christ went to Jerusalem to this feast, which lasted for seven days, with an eighth day observed after it. We are pointedly told that He did not go at the beginning (John vii. 8), but He waited until it was half over (John vii. 14), and then went to Jerusalem. The Transfiguration therefore may well have taken place on the first

[1] *A Brief Outline of the Present State and Future Expectations of the Jews*, p. 80, R. H. Herschell.

day of the feast. This would be a harmonious time, as it was a day of solemn rest (Lev. xxiii. 39).

As similar trains of thought ran through the conversations at the Mount of Transfiguration, and also at Jerusalem during the latter part of the Feast of Tabernacles, the idea is suggested that the one event followed very closely after the other. We find almost the same subjects discussed on the two occasions, but with what different audiences and surroundings!

Comparing the circumstances on each occasion we find:—

| At the Transfiguration. | At the Feast of Tabernacles. |
|---|---|
| (1) "His face did shine as the Sun" (Matt. xvii. 2. Compare also Acts xxvi. 13; Rev. i. 16, x. 1). | (1) Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world," *i.e.*, the Sun (John viii. 12). |
| (2) "There appeared unto them Elijah with Moses" (Mark ix. 4)—representatives of the law and of the prophets. | (2) "Did not Moses give you the law?" (John vii. 19). "The prophets are dead" (John viii. 53). |

(3) "Moses and Elijah . . . spake of His decease (or departure) (ἔξοδος) which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 30, 31).

(3) "Jesus . . . said, Yet a little while am I with you, and I go unto Him that sent Me. Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am, ye cannot come" (John vii. 33, 34). "When ye have lifted up the Son of man" (John viii. 28).

(4) "Peter . . . said, . . . If Thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles" (Matt. xvii. 4).

(4) "The Feast of Tabernacles was at hand . . . in the midst of the feast Jesus went. . . . On the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood" (John vii. 2, 14, 37).

(5) "Peter said . . . One for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah; not knowing what he said" (Luke ix. 33). (Ignorantly giving equal honour to each.)

(5) "Art Thou greater than our father Abraham? . . . Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am" (John viii. 53, 58).

(6) "A voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. xvii. 5).

(7) "Hear ye Him" (Matt. xvii. 5)

(8) The Father's Voice was prominent, and all the circumstances were awe-inspiring (Matt.xvii. 5, 6).

(9) The Father witnessed to the Son in the voice from heaven (Matt. xvii. 5).

(10) "Jesus commanded them saying, Tell the vision to no man

(6) Jesus said, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (the Father) (John viii. 29).

(7) "The officers answered, Never man so spake" (John vii. 46). "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father. . . . Ye cannot hear My word" (John viii. 38, 43).

(8) Christ spoke of and magnified the Father (John vii. 17, 28, 29, viii. 18, 19, 27, 28, 29, 38, 40, 42, 49, 54, 55).

(9) Christ said, "The Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me" (John viii. 18).

(10) The disciples "held their peace, and told no man in those

until the Son of man be risen from the dead" (Matt. xvii. 9).

days any of the things which they had seen" (Luke ix. 36). This accounts for the silence of the disciples at the Feast of Tabernacles.

The words of Christ to the Jews at the Feast of Tabernacles seem to indicate that He had just come from some special manifestation of the Father's presence and approval.

We have thus shown that very probably both the Baptism, A.D. 25, and the Transfiguration, A.D. 28, took place the one near, the other at, a Feast of Tabernacles; we further notice that the words of the voice from heaven on both occasions when the Father expressed His satisfaction were derived from those in Isaiah xlii. 1. (The word *Son* being substituted for *servant*.)

### (*c*) *Two Intermediate Feasts of Tabernacles.*

We now notice the further harmony that the same chapter (Isa. xlii) is again quoted or referred to at the two intermediate Feasts of Tabernacles, which we have shown (pp. 109, 116) occurred in A.D. 26 and 27, on days beginning the Sabbath year and

the next week of years respectively. (Compare Matt. iv. 15, 16, with Isa. ix. 2, xlii. 6, 7, and Matt. xii. 18-21 with Isa. xlii. 1-4.)

In the naming of Christ as "a great Light" in Matthew iv. 16, we are reminded of a similar reference to Him by Simeon (Luke ii. 32), who called the infant Christ "a Light for revelation to the Gentiles," in allusion to Isaiah ix. 2, and xlii. 7, a few weeks after the Nativity, which we have shown, on p. 143, was also most probably at a Feast of Tabernacles. It is also in accord with Christ's own proclamation of Himself as "the Light of the World" at His last Feast of Tabernacles (John vii. 2, 37, viii. 12).

We need not suppose the references to Isaiah ix. and xlii. to have referred *only* to the Feast of Tabernacles but to the periods in which they were included, in order to demonstrate that Christ's Ministry lasted between three and four years.

Hence if we suppose the Lord's Ministry to have lasted between three and four years we have several striking harmonies connected with the quotation of Isaiah ix. and xlii. with reference to four Feasts of Tabernacles, but if we suppose the shorter Ministry, the harmonies are greatly decreased,

because there would then only be two of those festivals. For we have deduced on page 214 that in that case the Ministry must have begun *after* the Feast of Tabernacles, A.D. 26.

## (F) HARMONIES CONNECTED WITH THE BAPTISM INDICATE A THREE AND A HALF YEARS' MINISTRY.

After His Baptism Christ went *straightway* into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Mark i. 12; Matt. iv. 1); consequently the public announcement by the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John i. 29, 36), must have come after both the Baptism and the Temptation.

### (*a*) *A New Moon at the Baptism.*

If we assume, as seems probable, that Christ came to Bethabara, where the Baptist was (John i. 28), immediately after the Temptation, it follows that the new Moon was shining at the time of the Baptism, if the Ministry began, as we have concluded that it did, at the Feast of Tabernacles.

For, allowing four or five days from the day when Christ came to Bethabara (John i. 28) to the Feast of Tabernacles, it follows that the Baptism was forty-four

or forty-five days before that feast, which was on the fifteenth day of the month. Counting backward forty-four or forty-five days we reach the beginning of the previous month (as a lunation is approximately twenty-nine and a half days), consequently the Baptism may well have been on the holy day of a new Moon.

Hence we have the harmony that when the Holy Spirit endued Christ with special power for service, the new Moon was, as at the Annunciation (see p. 189), probably just appearing in the sky, announcing a new beginning.

On the assumption of the shorter ministry it is manifestly impossible to make any inference that the new Moon was shining at the Baptism.

### (*b*) *The Baptism in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles.*

At the Nativity, which we have concluded (p. 143) took place at the Feast of Tabernacles, there was peace and rejoicing among men in whom God was well pleased, and also among the heavenly host, both at the time and also for some months before and afterwards (Luke i. 46-55, ii. 14, 20, 28-38; Matt. ii. 10).

At the Baptism, which was a little more than forty days before the beginning of the Ministry at Cana

of Galilee, we have the record that God the Father expressed His satisfaction in the voice from heaven. It thus appears to be harmonious that the birth of Christ and the beginning of His Ministry were each associated with the glad Feast of Tabernacles.

This harmony could hardly have been so close on the supposition of the shorter Ministry, for we have seen (p. 214) that the Baptist could not have begun his career before the end of October. It would take some time for John to have attracted much attention, consequently the Baptism of Christ could scarcely have taken place before the beginning of December—more than two months after the Feast of Tabernacles.

## (G) OTHER HARMONIES POINTING TO A THREE AND A HALF YEARS' MINISTRY.

The following harmonies which we have previously noticed, if Christ's Ministry lasted between three and four years, are lost if it only continued between two and three years.

### (*a*) *Harmony with respect to Age.*

The Lord's age at the beginning of His Ministry would have been thirty-three years and a quarter, which is not so easily covered by the phrase "about thirty years of age" (Luke iii. 23), as is thirty-two, the age necessitated by a three and a half years'

Ministry, if the Nativity were at Tabernacles B.C. 8 and the Crucifixion at Passover A.D. 29. No harmony exists between the age of thirty-three and a quarter and those of twenty, twenty-five and thirty, at which young Levites began their various services, as is the case on the assumption of the longer Ministry.

(*b*) *Harmony with regard to the Morning Star at the Nativity and at the beginning of Christ's Ministry.*

The forerunner and Christ would not both have begun their lives and their ministries at the same (No. 1) period of shining of the Morning Star (see Fig. IV. and VI.), as must have been the case on the assumption of a three and a half years' Ministry.

(*c*) *Harmony with regard to the Early Passover and the Feast in John* v. 1.

Under the supposition of the shorter Ministry the unnamed feast in John v. 1 could not have been the Passover; consequently the harmonies between (*l*) and (*n*) Fig. VI. (see p. 204), between the times of utterance of Luke ii. 49 and John v. 17, could not be so close as is possible on the assumption of the longer Ministry.

*(d) Harmonies with regard to the Period of Three and a Half Years—the half of a Week of Years.*

There is a harmony or fitness in three and a half years for the length of Christ's Ministry, as it is a period frequently mentioned in Scripture—the half of a week of years (see Dan. ix. 27); time, times and a half are also supposed to mean the same period (Dan. xii. 7; Rev. xii. 14), and the expressions forty-two months (Rev. xi. 2, xiii. 5) and 1260 days (Rev. xi. 3, xii. 6), under the old supposition that a year contains twelve months of thirty days each, are also thought to refer to the same period of three and a half years. There is no corresponding recurrence in Scripture of a period of two years and two or three months.

## (H) CONCLUSION THAT CHRIST'S MINISTRY LASTED FOR THREE AND A HALF YEARS.

We thus observe that the inference from the harmonies which we have considered all agree with the deductions from the two historical data quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that Christ's Ministry lasted three and a half years; hence we put aside the vague guesses of some of the early Fathers that the Ministry lasted for a

less period than three years. We also conclude that as the harmonies again agree among themselves in all pointing to the same result, which is in full accord with the available historical data, —that once again they have furnished us with a consistent answer to our inquiries.

## (I) SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN CHRIST'S MINISTRY.

That the teaching and events of Christ's Ministry are arranged in a consistent way, and that there is unity and design in their several positions in the Gospel narrative, has long been recognised; thus one writer,[1] assuming a Ministry of three years, divides it thus :—

(1) The year of obscurity.

(2) The year of public favour.

(3) The year of opposition.

He allows that in the second year Christ was already assailed with considerable opposition; that is indeed true, for at the very beginning of it the inhabitants of His own city of Nazareth had endeavoured to cast Him over a cliff and kill Him (Luke iv. 29); for their subsequent opposition

[1] *The Life of Jesus Christ*, p. 47, Professor J. Stalker, D.D.

in this same year see Matthew viii. 34, ix. 3, 11, 34, xii. 2, 14.

We have just shown that Christ's Ministry probably lasted for three and a half years; following the same general plan as that given above, we may more accurately classify the years as follows:—

(1) *The year of obscurity.*—Lasting from the marriage of Cana in Galilee (John ii. 1-11) to just before the reading at Nazareth (Luke iv. 16-19).

(2) *The Sabbath year, and beginning of opposition.*—From the reading at Nazareth to just before the quotation of Isaiah in Matthew xii. 18-21.

(3) *The year of the new outlook, and of increased opposition.*—From the quotation in Matthew xii. 18-21 to just before the Transfiguration.

(4) *The year of rejection and death*—"taken away in the midst of My days" (Ps. cii. 24).—From the Transfiguration to the Crucifixion. (What a contrast!)

(*a*) "*In the Midst of My days.*"

A long life was considered to be a sign of Divine favour (Ps. lxi. 6; Prov. ix. 11). On the other hand an early death was the reverse. As Christ died at the age of thirty-five and a half years, He was

taken away in the midst of man's normal life of seventy years.

His death occurred also in the midst of the days of three other periods :—

(1) In the midst of the fourth year of His Ministry.

(2) As the Ministry lasted for three and a half years, He was taken away in the midst of a week of years.

(3) As He died at the Paschal full moon, He was taken away in the midst of a month.

## (J) THE ASCENSION.

The Ascension took place forty days (Acts i. 3) after the Resurrection, which was three days (or perhaps two according to our method of counting) after the Crucifixion, which was at full Moon; it follows therefore that the Ascension must have taken place as the Moon in the following (the second) month was fast waning away, and so the disappearance of the Moon from the heavens, in the ordinary course of nature, coincided with the disappearance of Christ from this earth. This harmony is in accord with the new Moons at the Annunciation (see p. 189), and at the Baptism (see p. 232).

# WAITING.

I am waiting for the dawning
Of the bright and blessed day,
When the darksome night of sorrow
Shall have vanished far away;
When for ever with the Saviour,
Far beyond this vale of tears,
I shall swell the song of worship
Through the everlasting years.

I am looking at the brightness
(See, it shineth from afar)
Of the clear and joyous beaming
Of the "Bright and Morning Star".
Through the dark gray mist of morning
Do I see its glorious light;
Then away with every shadow
Of this sad and weary night.

I am waiting for the coming
Of the Lord who died for me;
Oh, His words have thrilled my spirit,
"I will come again for thee!"
I can almost hear His footfall
On the threshold of the door,
And my heart, my heart is longing
To be with Him evermore.

—*Trevor Francis.*

# CHAPTER VII.

## EXPECTATION.

(A) THE NEWS OF THE NATIVITY.

(*a*) *The Magi were not told by Witnesses.*

(*b*) *The Magi had no special Divine Revelation before they started.*

(B) THE MAGI WERE EARNEST SERVANTS OF GOD AND WERE NOT WIZARDS.

(*a*) *Condemnation of Wizards in Scripture.*

(*b*) *Current Names were used in Scripture.*

(*c*) *Occupation of the Magi.*

(*d*) *The Magi compared with Daniel.*

(C) SOURCES OF THE MAGI'S INFORMATION.

(*a*) *Prophecy that Christ would be born King of the Jews.*

(*b*) *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.*

(*c*) *General Messianic Expectation.*

(*d*) *Typical Meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles.*

(*e*) *The Observance of the Sabbath Year.*

(*f*) *"My Messenger . . . before Me."*

(*g*) *A Prolonged Heralding probable.*

(*h*) *A Diagram similar to Fig. VI. available.*

(D) THE MAGI COULD HAVE INFERRED THAT THE NATIVITY WOULD BE AT TABERNACLES B.C. 8.

(E) ACTION OF THE MAGI.

(*a*) *Delayed Departure from their own Country.*

(*b*) *Arrival at Jerusalem.*

(F) ACTION OF HEROD.

(G) DISCOURAGEMENTS TO THE MAGI.

(H) THE REWARD OF THE MAGI'S FAITH.

(I) THE FUTURE COMING OF CHRIST.

(*a*) *Ardently longed for by Faithful Believers.*

(*b*) *A Terror to the Ungodly.*

(*c*) *The Scriptural Blessing to the Expectant.*

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## (A) THE NEWS OF THE NATIVITY.

When John the Baptist was born, five to six months before the Nativity, "all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judæa" (Luke i. 65), and when Christ was born the good news was announced, for "all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds" (Luke ii. 18), and again forty days after the Nativity, at the Purification, Anna, when she saw the infant Christ, "spake of Him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke ii. 38).

### (*a*) *The Magi were not told by Witnesses.*

As we have supposed the Magi did not arrive at Bethlehem till about three months after the Nativity, it may perhaps be thought that news of the birth of Christ reached them in their own country and induced them to start; but taking into

account the slow rate of daily travel, the considerable distance of their country in the East, and the amount of time likely to be consumed in making arrangements for the expedition of men of some importance, there does not appear to have been time for the intelligence to have reached the Magi before they had decided to make their start.

There would of course have been plenty of time for the news of Christ's birth to have reached them *en route;* but it seems hardly likely that they heard even then; there is no hint of it in the Gospel narrative, and they themselves gave quite another reason for their journey when they arrived at Jerusalem; the fact that they went to that city, and that they did not go at once to Bethlehem, where doubtless the shepherds would have directed them, negatives the idea that they had received the news from them; very probably those who had seen and worshipped the infant Saviour were afraid to tell men who were apparently in the confidence of the cruel Herod.

The only reason which the Magi gave for their journey was, "we saw His star in the East, and are come to worship Him" (Matt. ii. 2). We have already concluded that what they saw was the

planet Venus, shining in its ordinary course as the Morning Star, but the question arises, How did they know *which* of its periods of shining indicated the Nativity?

(*b*) *The Magi had no special Divine Revelation before they started.*

We may, of course, assume that they had a special Divine revelation ordering them to leave their own country, and go to Jerusalem at that particular period of the shining of the Morning Star, but as we are not told that it was so, it will be well to examine other possible sources of information before we come to that conclusion. Since we *are* informed that afterwards an evidently miraculous movement was given to the Star, and as after that again the Magi were divinely warned in a dream not to return to Herod, it seems natural to suppose that at first they had no direct spiritual guidance. Let us consider, therefore, what possible sources of information or suggestions (apart from direct Divine guidance) were available to them.

## (B) THE MAGI WERE EARNEST SERVANTS OF GOD, AND WERE NOT WIZARDS.

At the outset we must investigate the plausible assumptions which have been made that the Magi

were students of the occult arts, which enabled them to find the infant Saviour. This seems to have been quietly assumed as an undoubted fact, needing no proof, as it is simply asserted by Milton[1] that they were "star-led wizards" and by others that they were astrologers or devoted to astrology.[2] Kepler and other astronomers have calculated that certain planets were in conjunction at about the time of the Nativity; and so it has been actually suggested[3] that these planetary positions may have been interpreted astrologically by the Magi to indicate the birth of Christ!

(*a*) *Condemnation of Wizards in Scripture.*

But these suggestions are flat contradictions of the general voice of Scripture, which speaks with the greatest decision in opposition to wizards, sorcerers, astrologers, *et hoc omne genus*, as is shown by the following passages:—

"Thou shalt not suffer a sorceress to live" (Exod. xxii. 18). "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto

[1] *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, line 23, Milton.

[2] *The New Testament for English Readers*, on Matthew ii., p. 6, Dean Alford.

[3] *Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*, p. 890, Kitto.

the wizards that chirp and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God?" (Isa. viii. 19). "They (the Egyptians) shall seek unto the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. And I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord" (Isa. xix. 3, 4). "Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, . . . let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from the things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them" (Isa. xlvii. 12-14). "Hearken ye not to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreams, nor to your soothsayers, nor to your sorcerers" (Jer. xxvii. 9). "A man with an unclean spirit . . . cried out, saying . . . I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. . . . (Jesus) cast out many devils; and He suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him" (Mark i. 23-25, 34). "A certain maid having a spirit of divination . . . cried out, saying, These men are servants of the Most High God, which proclaim unto you the way of Salvation. . . . But

Paul, being sore troubled, turned, and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour" (Acts xvi. 16-18). "Not a few of them that practised curious (magical) arts brought their books together, and burned them in the sight of all" (Acts xix. 19; see also Rev. xxi. 8, xxii. 15). On the other hand we read "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8).

(*b*) *Current Names were used in Scripture.*

Let us investigate the characters of the wise men from the East, who came to offer their gifts to the infant Saviour. It is true they are called in Greek "Magi," a word of Persian origin, from which our words "magic" and "magician" are derived; the same word occurs in Acts xiii. 6 and 8, where it is both times translated "sorcerer," and in Acts viii. 9 and 11 a verb and substantive occur, each derived from the same; they are translated "used sorcery" and "sorceries" respectively.

Our translators, however, have not called the wise men who came from the East "sorcerers;" possibly the word may still have retained its original meaning of "wise men" apart from any evil

sense which it afterwards acquired and even then may have begun to have. Philo is stated to have used the word in a good sense of men who gave themselves up to the study of nature and the contemplation of the Divine perfections. But if we grant that the name was not a good one, even in those days, we shall be able to find another wise man in the East of a previous age, who was a most faithful servant of God, although some of his names or descriptions were by no means desirable ones. The prophet Daniel, in the difficult surroundings of a heathen court, is thrice commended by the Divine messenger as a man greatly beloved (Daniel ix. 23, x. 11, 19), but *he* is described as chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon, "Master of the astrologers," and again "Master of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans and soothsayers" (Daniel ii. 48, iv. 9, v. 11), and his king Nebuchadnezzar had actually named him Belteshazzar after the name of his false god (Daniel iv. 8).

Consequently in the case of the wise men from the East, it is better not to come to a conclusion hastily from the name they bore; but it is wiser to consider their conduct and the general aspect of Scripture with regard to ordinary nomenclature.

(*c*) *Occupation of the Magi.*

We should judge from Herod's question to them about the time of the appearing of the Star, and the reliance which he must have placed on their reply (as it guided him in fixing the ages of the infants he ordered to be massacred (Matt. ii. 7, 16)), that the wise men were regarded as authorities on the subject of astronomy and on the movements of the heavenly bodies; so very probably they were engaged in the innocent and useful work of regulating the calendar. In the popular mind of that day those engaged in lawful astronomy and those giving themselves up to the follies of astrology might all be classed under one name, which bore a sinister meaning.

We are told little about the wise men or their country, but it is not unlikely that some of the teachings of the faithful Daniel may have survived among the descendants of his students.

We think we have said enough to render it certain that the wise men could not have discovered the incarnate Son of God, and have offered Him acceptable gifts by any process of magic, astrology or occult art; our subsequent investigation of their conduct will confirm us in this view.

(*d*) *The Magi compared with Daniel.*

It seems fair to place Daniel and the wise men from the East in the same category, as their circumstances were similar in several respects. The prophet was looking forward to the termination of the seventy years' captivity (Dan. ix. 1-4), the Magi were expecting the coming Messiah towards the end of the seventy weeks of years (Dan. ix. 24-27). How did Daniel look forward? how did he seek the promised deliverance? On a certain date he states: "I Daniel **understood by the books** the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem, even seventy years. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed unto the Lord my God and made confession" (Dan. ix. 2-4); and then follows a long and earnest prayer with deep contrition for sin.

(C) SOURCES OF THE MAGI'S INFORMATION.

Is it not natural to suppose that the wise men also adopted a similar course in seeking the infant Saviour? Because when the chief priests and

scribes in Jerusalem (Matt. ii. 5, 6) quoted the prophecy of Micah v. 2 to indicate the place of Christ's birth in their reply to Herod, the Magi accepted and acted on this information, and thus recognised the authority upon which it was based.

Let us consider how much the wise men could have understood about the date of Christ's birth from the Scriptures, which it is most probable with their earnest desires and with their ample means (for they offered costly gifts) that they had procured.

(*a*) *Prophecy that Christ would be born King of the Jews.*

They could learn that the One they were seeking would be King by right of birth. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. ix. 6; see also Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4). That they had accepted and believed these Scriptures is shown by their question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" (Matt. ii. 2).

(*b*) *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.*

We thus conclude that they knew and acknowledged the Scriptures, but we can understand that,

coming as they did from an Eastern land, they would have bestowed special study on the prophecies of Daniel, which had possibly been written in their own country.

They must have pondered over the meaning of the sixty-nine and seventy weeks (483 and 490 years) in Daniel ix. 24-27, and the special events of the last seven years of the longer period. They must have known the date of the command to return and build Jerusalem (Dan. ix. 25), as it is recorded in Ezra vii. 6-9 that the permission to build the Temple (which virtually included the sanction to rebuild the city, actually carried out thirteen years later by Nehemiah) was given in the seventh year of Artaxerxes or B.C. 458. Consequently they would readily calculate that in B.C. 8 there would only remain a little more than thirty years until the beginning of the last week of years. They would further judge that sufficient time must be allowed for the coming One to attain man's estate and to assume the prominent position which was foretold; they would therefore infer in the years just before B.C. 8 that the time for His birth must be fast approaching.

(*c*) *General Messianic Expectation.*

There were regular communications between the Eastern nations at that time, and the Magi must have been aroused to more earnest seeking by the knowledge that others also were in expectation of the coming Messiah then and during the following years.

This Messianic expectation is evident from the words of Simeon (Luke ii. 29, 30) soon after the Nativity: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation"; and of Anna who "spake of Him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke ii. 38); from the reply given by the scribes when questioned by Herod, which we have just considered; from the insurrection of Theudas who gave himself out to be somebody, and from the rising up of Judas of Galilee fourteen years after the Nativity (Acts v. 36, 37). Later on, from the eager question addressed to the Baptist by the people who were in expectation (Luke iii. 15), "Who art Thou?" (John i. 19); from the words of Andrew to Simon Peter, "We have found the Messiah"

(John i. 41); and of Philip to Nathaniel, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write" (John i. 45); and from the question which the Baptist sent by two of his disciples to Christ, "Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" (Matt. xi. 3; Luke vii. 19).

After the miracle of feeding the five thousand the multitude exclaimed, "This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world" (John vi. 14), and at the last Feast of Tabernacles the people said, "When the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is. . . . When the Christ shall come, will He do more signs than those which this man hath done?" (John vii. 27, 31). We read also that Joseph of Arimathæa was a man "looking for the Kingdom of God" (Mark xv. 43). And the Samaritans also had an expectation of the Lord, for the woman of Sychar said, "I know that Messiah cometh (which is called Christ); when He is come, He will declare unto us all things" (John iv. 25).

The Messianic expectation at about this time is also borne witness to by Josephus,[1] Tacitus[2] and Suetonius.

[1] *Wars*, vi. 5. [2] *Hist.*, v. 13.

(*d*) *Typical Meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles.*

The Magi had doubtless heard of the joyful Feast of Tabernacles, and they must have known that King Solomon had dedicated the Temple which he built on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (2 Chron. v. 3). As the glory of the LORD came and filled the Temple at that time (2 Chron. v. 13, vii. 1, 2), they may have argued that when Messiah is born in the flesh, He will also probably come at the same joyful feast.

(*e*) *The Observance of the Sabbath Year.*

They would also be acquainted with the Hebrew arrangement of the Sabbath year, and so they might further consider that the Feast of Tabernacles held a year after the ending of a Sabbath one—when the full fruits of the earth were first again safely gathered in—would be a more joyful and consequently a more appropriate occasion than other intermediate ones.

(*f*) "*My Messenger . . . before Me.*"

The Magi would also be acquainted with the prophecy of Malachi iii. 1, "My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me," and they

might consider these words in connection with the Sun of righteousness in Malachi iv. 2, as did Zacharias when he quoted Malachi iii. 1 in Luke i. 76 and spoke about the Dayspring just afterwards (Luke i. 78). Consequently they may well have judged that the "messenger . . . before Me" was the Morning Star itself, and that Christ would be born when it was shining.

(*g*) *A Prolonged Heralding probable.*

Further, the Magi may have thought it most probable that the Nativity would be at some time after the Morning Star had given a somewhat prolonged heralding; as then it would better fulfil its office as forerunner, than if its first appearance and the Nativity came at the same time; they might also think that the Morning Star would soon disappear after the Saviour's birth, and after all those who had recognised its summons had obeyed its signal. Hence they might have concluded that the Nativity would be somewhere towards the latter part of the period of a shining of the Morning Star.

(*h*) *A Diagram similar to Fig. VI. available.*

There would most certainly have been sufficient astronomical knowledge among the wise men of

the East of that day to have furnished the Magi with a diagram similar to Fig. VI., which does not depend on any abstruse calculations or theories of modern date, but merely records the periods of shining of the Morning Star, which are known from the simplest form of ordinary observation to have recurred again and again, with unfailing regularity (subject to minor perturbations) in the past, and which consequently may be expected to come again in the future as they have done before.

It is, therefore, quite possible that the Magi came to the foregoing conclusions (*a*) to (*h*) (p. 251 to p. 257)—some of them they must certainly have made; and considering the strong Messianic expectation that existed at the time, and that several earnest people were engaged in the search for the infant Saviour, it seems highly probable that they may have arrived at all the conclusions, (*a*) to (*h*), which we have considered.

(D) THE MAGI COULD HAVE INFERRED THAT THE NATIVITY WOULD BE AT TABERNACLES B.C. 8.

What does all this involve? Plainly that the Magi must have expected that the Nativity was

to take place at the Feast of Tabernacles B.C. 8. For, according to the foregoing conclusions, the Nativity was to take place at a Feast of Tabernacles (*d*) (p. 255) on a year following a Sabbath one (*e*) (p. 255), when the Morning Star had been shining for more than half its period (*g*) (p. 256). The Nativity must also be at least twenty years before the beginning of the last of Daniel's period of seventy weeks of years (*b*) (p. 252), in order to allow time for the coming Prince to attain to manhood, and assume the prominent position foretold.

Looking now at Fig. VI., by the foregoing conclusions (*d*) and (*e*) (p. 255) the search of the Magi for the date of the Nativity would be confined to a Feast of Tabernacles twelve months after the end of a Sabbath year, *viz.*, to B.C. 8 or 1, A.D. 7, 14, 21 or 28. Of these they would notice that B.C. 8 fulfilled all the conditions perfectly.

B.C. 1 failed—because there was no Morning Star at all at the Feast of Tabernacles.

A.D. 7 failed—because the Morning Star gave an unsuitably short heralding at the Feast of Tabernacles.

A.D. 14 failed—because it gave less than twenty

years to the very end of Daniel's seventy weeks; as, of course, do all following years.

If this were the case—that the Magi actually knew from prayerful study of the prophecies when Christ should be born—does it not put us and our Bible-searching to shame; and should they not rise in our estimation from being thought of as heathen astrologers to being considered spiritually-minded men? In their dark surroundings they were specially blessed as seekers and finders (Matt. vii. 7).

### (E) ACTION OF THE MAGI.

Under these suppositions, therefore, let us picture to ourselves the action of the wise men. Long before they actually started they must have held many earnest conferences, ere they finally decided to go on their long and arduous expedition, and when at last their decision was made, the preparations for the journey had to be undertaken, including perhaps official permission to travel and passports or introductions to the authorities at Jerusalem. Judging from the value of the presents which they gave to the Saviour, from the great public interest they excited on their arrival at Jerusalem, and from the way in which Herod

treated them, they must have been persons of importance, and they probably travelled with a considerable following. Their departure must consequently have caused some stir in their own city and country, possibly some derided them and others may have placed obstacles in their way; but most likely the easy tolerance of any form of religious action which characterised the Greek and Roman world of that period also prevailed in more Eastern countries.

### (*a*) *Delayed Departure of the Magi from their own Country.*

They were thus able to make a successful, though very probably a considerably delayed, start; those who are familiar with Eastern travel will readily understand that various causes may have hindered the beginning of the Magi's journey if they travelled by themselves; if, on the other hand, they joined an ordinary trade caravan, they may still have been obliged to wait until the heat of summer had somewhat abated; in either case we have a probable explanation of the reason why they did not arrive till some three months after the Nativity—doubtless they themselves wished to

come sooner. Their time of arrival was, however, appropriate typically, as they represented Gentile believers, while the shepherds and Simeon and Anna were the faithful among the Jews, to whom the manifestation of the will and purpose of God always came "first" (Acts iii. 26; Rom. ii. 9, 10).

On the journey the Magi doubtless rose each day before the Sun, when they saw their signal, the Morning Star, shining in the Eastern sky; turning their backs upon it, they pursued their journey in a Westerly direction, their daily marches of twelve to eighteen miles bringing them in due time to their first objective, Jerusalem, the capital of the country of the King they sought.

### (*b*) *Arrival of the Magi at Jerusalem.*

Probably they expected to find the object of their search already held in high honour by His own people; they may have argued thus: "If we Gentile strangers have thought it worth while to undertake this long and troublesome journey, surely His own people, who have better means than we of knowing and recognising Him, and whose nation will receive special glory and deliverance from Him, must be rejoicing at His Advent".

Consequently they boldly demanded in the most public way, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we saw His Star in the East, and are come to worship Him" (Matt. ii. 2). They did not ask if He were born, they were evidently sure about that, but they wished to know where He was. This question aroused the greatest public attention in Jerusalem. Herod the King heard of them, but he was troubled—very evidently *he* was not the king they were in search of and wished to honour; the people too were troubled—all of them; they probably feared—and the event showed they had good reason to fear—some outburst of the tyrant's wrath, when any one crossed his purpose (Matt. ii. 3).

### (F) ACTION OF HEROD.

Herod the King went into the subject carefully, gathered together all the chief priests and the scribes, and inquired of them where the Christ, who was evidently the King the Magi were in search of, should be born; they told him, quite correctly, that according to the prophecy of Micah v. 2 Bethlehem was to be the favoured spot. But Herod had no wish for the Messiah.

Then the crafty tyrant honoured (?) the visitors by giving them a private interview (Matt. ii. 7), flattered their vanity by appealing to their knowledge about the time of the appearing of the Star, while at the same time he obtained some of the information which he desired for the execution of his bloodthirsty designs; he encouraged them in their search, and thus tried to gain their confidence, and he hoped he had induced them to tell him where the infant Saviour was when they had found Him; as he falsely told them that he also wished to go and worship Him.

This action of Herod's points to the fact that the Magi were persons of influence and importance, and possibly that there was a widespread sympathy with the object of their visit, which Herod was unwilling to combat openly. He might, of course, have imprisoned the Magi as persons wishing to set up another King (John xix. 12), or he might have sent some secret spies of his own with them, but he preferred diplomatically to treat them with deference, as representatives of a foreign nation, and perhaps he thought he would avoid complications with his neighbours by waiting to carry out his dreadful designs until the Magi were out of

his country again. Doubtless he thought, "I have deceived them and thrown them off their guard, they are sure to come back and tell me where Christ is, and even if they do not do so, it will not be difficult to find out where they have been with their large following, and thus in any case I shall find the One I wish to kill".

### (G) DISCOURAGEMENTS TO THE MAGI.

The Magi, having obtained some information in reply to their eager queries, set out again on their journey, this time a short one, to the town of Bethlehem, only six miles distant. What puzzling, conflicting thoughts must have passed through their minds during their stay in Jerusalem, and as they started to leave it in the early morning. Instead of the eager expectation which filled *their* hearts, the Magi found all men in Jerusalem troubled at their question; instead of finding the heavenly King known and honoured, they only received a reference to the Hebrew Scriptures, which they had most likely themselves already pondered over; it would appear, too, that none went with them from Jerusalem to bear them company; apathy, or more probably fear of Herod's

displeasure, hindered them from doing so. Depressing thoughts might well have filled the hearts of the wise men, they might have said to themselves, "If His own people near at hand do not know where He is, and do not want to know, how can *we* expect to find Him?" The thought may have come to their minds, that after all perhaps they had made a huge mistake, that they were on a fruitless journey, and had better go back at once to their own country.

(H) THE REWARD OF THE MAGI'S FAITH.

But faith triumphed, and they set out on their quest once more, and when at last they beheld the miraculous movement of the Star from the East to the South, when it "went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was" (Matt. ii. 9), we can well understand that they rejoiced with exceeding great joy (Matt. ii. 10), and all the more on account of their previous discouragements. They entered the house, they had made no mistake, and when they saw "the young Child with Mary His mother"[1] (Matt. ii. 11), the

[1] The two are not named in the Scripture narrative in the order with which we are familiar in our picture galleries, "The Virgin and Child" and "The Madonna and Child".

humble surroundings could not prevent them from recognising the long-sought Messiah, and "they fell down and worshipped Him; and opening their treasures they offered unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh" which they had brought for His acceptance.

Happy reward to the eager expectation of spiritually-minded men who had long been seeking to find the Saviour!

## (I) THE FUTURE COMING OF CHRIST.

Expectation for the coming of Christ is not confined in the Scriptures to the times of the Magi, but there is another and more glorious coming still unfulfilled, when those who have already received eternal life through trusting in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ will receive glorified bodies.

### (*a*) *The Coming of Christ ardently longed for by Faithful Believers.*

The expectation of this still future coming is often alluded to in Scripture, especially in the New Testament, and with intense longing, as we see in a few quotations which we give in the striking words of Dr. Weymouth's translation: "When Christ appears—He is our true life—then you also

will appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4). "The final greeting of me—Paul—with my own hand . . . OUR LORD IS COMING" (1 Cor. xvi. 21, 22). "All creation, gazing eagerly, as if with outstretched neck, is waiting and longing to see the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 19). "The Lord Himself shall come down from Heaven . . . the dead in Christ will rise first. Afterwards we who are alive and are still on earth will be caught up in their company amid clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we shall be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1 Thess. iv. 16-18). "We are waiting with longing expectation for the coming from heaven of a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. iii. 20).

(*b*) *The Coming of Christ a Terror to the Ungodly.*

But how different is the aspect of Christ's return to the ungodly and to the mere professor of religion! As the cruel Herod did not hesitate to perpetrate what was probably the most atrocious act of his life when he murdered the babes in his attempts to destroy the infant Christ, so will the man of sin, the son of perdition, oppose Christ and His

people and exalt himself against God, but the Lord Jesus will utterly overwhelm him "by the awful splendour of His coming" (2 Thess. ii. 8). We also read the heart-rending words for the mere professor of religion, "if any one's name was not found recorded in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev. xx. 15).

There are harmonies between these two comings of Christ; for instance, both have been foretold and both have been looked forward to by the faithful few, disregarded and not wished for by the majority.

John the Baptist heralded the coming Christ as a witness beforehand (John i. 7, 8). With regard to the second coming of the Lord we read, "this Good News of the Kingdom shall be proclaimed throughout the whole world to set the evidence before all the Gentiles; and then the end will come" (Matt. xxiv. 14). During the past century the Gospel has been preached to so many nations that at the present moment there are few yet unreached; this widespread testimony has been rendered possible by the great facilities which we now have for travel, which, together with increase of knowledge, is mentioned by Daniel (xii. 4) as another sign of the end.

Many people, nowadays, if they trouble to think about the subject at all, say, "What has become of His promised return? For from the time our forefathers fell asleep all things continue as they have been ever since the creation of the world" (2 Peter iii. 4). Many a worldly man has laughed at the student of prophecy who has prematurely announced the return of the Lord; the time indicated by the mistaken interpreter of Scripture has come and gone, and yet He has not appeared, and men dismiss from their minds all thoughts of His return as speculative, unpractical, visionary and waste of time; they say, what is the use of looking for that which may never come in our day?

### (*c*) *The Scriptural Blessing to those expecting the Coming of Christ.*

Scripture does not view the subject in this way: there is a blessing for every believer who cultivates the expectant attitude of waiting for the Lord's return—whether he happens to be alive or not at the actual time of the Coming. A crown of righteousness is promised "to all who love the thought of His appearing" (2 Tim. iv. 8).

There is also a present and immediate effect on

the believer who entertains the wish for Christ's return, for we read that every man who has this hope of the reappearing of Christ, and of likeness to Him in glory, "purifies himself, so as to be pure as He is" (1 John iii. 3).

In his day Moses was looking for the promised deliverance from Egyptian bondage in the fourth generation (Gen. xv. 16), and as he himself belonged to the fourth generation (Exod. vi. 16, 18, 20), he endeavoured to begin to effect the deliverance when he was about forty years old, when he killed the Egyptian (Acts vii. 23-25); but though he was premature in his estimate by forty years and despised by his own people (Exod. ii. 14), yet he was afterwards honoured above his fellows in being divinely directed to be the human leader to effect the deliverance of his nation from the land of bondage (Acts vii. 35, 36).

Thus we find, as the result of our search, that there is a wonderful spiritual harmony pervading the different books of Scripture, in every sense "God's message is full of life and power" (Heb. iv. 12). It is not a mere record of the past, it guides us into the way of life in the present, and it leads on with certainty to the future. It does

not conclude like any ordinary book, but it points forward to the thrilling climax of the yet unfinished story—the return of Christ—and the Book ends with the final words of Divine comfort and longing desire, "Yes, I am coming quickly." "Amen, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 20).

# APPENDIX.

(A) THE HEBREW CALENDAR.

(*a*) *The Three Feasts of the* LORD *were all connected with Agriculture.*

(*b*) *The Month of the Crucifixion.*

(*c*) *An Intercalary Month in the Sabbath Year.*

(B) THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE PASCHAL LAMBS.

(*a*) *The Probability of the Lord's Death synchronising exactly with the killing of the Paschal Lambs.*

(*b*) *Changes of the Sun's Altitude.*

(C) 2 PETER I. 19.

(D) GOSPEL CHRONOLOGY.

## (A) THE HEBREW CALENDAR.

THE main features of the Hebrew calendar are as follows :—

Each year consisted of twelve lunar months, with another (intercalary) one put in when required, so as always to keep each month at approximately the same season of the year. As Meton noticed about B.C. 430 that nineteen solar years contain $235 = 12 \times 19 + 7$ lunations (within 2 hours 10 minutes), it follows that seven extra or intercalary months must be inserted in the period of nineteen years, consequently a lunar month was generally added to the other twelve at a third year, but sometimes at a second year.

Though the intercalary month is nowhere mentioned in Scripture, and though only twelve months[1] in the year are enumerated (1 Chron. xxvii. 1-15; 1 Kings iv. 7), as Ideler remarks on the Hebrew calendar, "it is absolutely necessary to add a thirteenth month from time to time to the twelve of the lunar year, if we do not wish the beginning of the year to go on being displaced, and to recede gradually round the whole circle of the seasons". This recession does take place in the Mahomedan calendar, which has no intercalary month, but it could not have happened with the Hebrew calendar, as the wave sheaf of first-fruits had always to be presented just after Passover (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11).

The Hebrew method of knowing when to insert the extra month was an exceedingly simple one, being dependent upon the condition of the crops in early spring. The year began at a new Moon, and the particular new Moon which was to be the first was determined as follows:[2] On a certain day in the twelfth month of the year, specimens of the earliest crops were sent to Jerusalem, where they were examined by a committee of three, appointed by the Sanhedrim; if they were found to be forward, the next new Moon was made the first day of the first month of the new year; if, on the other hand, the specimens did not give promise that the necessary barley in the ear would be furnished by the middle of the following month (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11), an extra or intercalary month was added to the old year, making a thirteenth, and the new year was not commenced until *another* new Moon had appeared, twenty-nine or thirty days later.

[1] In the modern Jewish calendar the intercalary month has no name of its own, it is simply called Ve-Adar, which means the month Adar repeated.

[2] *The Temple*, etc., p. 200, Rev. A. Edersheim.

This plan would be in full agreement with the command given to the Israelites when they were in Egypt (Exod. xii. 2, 18), that the first month in the year was to be that towards the middle of which the barley was in the ear, and the wheat not grown (Exod. ix. 31). As the climate of parts of the deep depression of the Jordan valley approximates to that of Egypt, the specimens were doubtless sent from the former locality, and this circumstance would explain the early date in the season, on which the Passover was sometimes held in Bible times. It is believed that this plan caused that feast occasionally to be celebrated as early as four or five days before the equinox [1] and sometimes as late as about twenty-five or twenty-six days after it. Some writers,[2] however, place the limits for beginning the year somewhat later, but it seems probable that they have not given full weight to the fact that very early specimens of barley in the ear could and would be obtained from the warm Jordan valley. The ears need not have been quite ripe, as the barley fields of Egypt had not been reaped, when all the crop was destroyed by hail, only a few days before the first Passover (Exod. ix. 31, x. 4, 22).

This simple plan served the purpose of the Hebrews when they lived in their own small country, and when they

[1] *An Epitome of the Civil and Literary Chronology of Rome*, etc., p. 325, C. J. F. Clinton, who mentions that Epiphanius and the author of a paschal homily on the works of Chrysostom state that the Passover was sometimes observed before the equinox.

[2] Professor G. Schiaparelli (*Astronomy in the Old Testament*, p. 122), thinks that the first new Moon, which began the first month of the Jewish year, could never have been before the last days of March at earliest. This would involve that the earliest date for the Passover (the fourteenth day of the month) would be after the end of the first week in April.

were in constant intercourse with Jerusalem. But it had the disadvantage that the beginning of the year could often be predicted with certainty only a few days before it began, and it was a method which was inapplicable when the Hebrews were driven away to different countries where barley ripens at different times of the year; consequently modern Jews, and Christians following their example, have made Passover and Easter dependent on astronomical data of the first full Moon after the equinox, the Metonic cycle being the groundwork in each case. The dates of these festivals can thus be predicted years ahead and in any part of the world. The Chaldeans employed an astronomical plan to determine their calendar; and after the Babylonian captivity the Jews are said to have consulted astronomical tables as a check on their plan of determining the first month of the year by an inspection of early crops.

### (*a*) *The Three Great Feasts of the* LORD *were all connected with Agriculture.*

The three great Hebrew feasts (at each of which all the men were ordered to appear before the LORD at the place He chose (Deut. xvi. 16)) were Passover or Unleavened Bread; Harvest, or Weeks, or Pentecost; and Tabernacles or Ingathering (Exod. xxiii. 15-17); they were all connected with the operations of agriculture.

| Names of the Hebrew Feasts of the LORD. | Duration. | State of the Moon. | Corresponding Christian Festival. | Average Time of Year, always correct within about a fortnight. | Remarks. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Passover or Unleavened Bread. | The paschal Lamb was killed on the 14th of the month; then came seven days of unleavened bread (Exod. xii. 6, 15). | Full. | Good Friday. | Soon after the Vernal equinox. Beginning of April. | The Passover was to be kept on the *second* month by those unclean by a dead body, and also by those on a journey in the first month (Num. ix. 10, 11; 2 Chron. xxx. 2). |
| Harvest, Weeks, or Pentecost. | One day (Lev. xxiii. 21; Acts ii. 1). | Second quarter. | Whitsunday. | Middle of May. | |
| Tabernacles or Ingathering. | Seven days. On the first day an holy convocation, also one on the eighth day (Lev. xxiii. 35, 36). | Full. | None. | Just after Autumnal equinox. End of September. | Jeroboam severely blamed for ordaining a rival feast on the fifteenth day of the *eighth* month, "which he had devised of his own heart" (1 Kings xii. 32, 33). |

Though the Christian festivals of Easter and Whitsunday are directly derived from the Hebrew Passover and Pentecost respectively, they are not now calculated in exactly the same way, consequently in some years the corresponding Hebrew and Christian festivals are separated from each other by a lunar month.

The Hebrews were commanded to begin the year in the spring (Exod. xii. 2). The Sabbath year, however, began

in the autumn at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. xxxi. 10). Modern Jews begin the year on the first day of the seventh month—a fortnight before the Feast of Tabernacles—and they now employ the names for the months derived from the Babylonians during the captivity.

The Hebrew day (of twenty-four hours) (Gen. i. 5) and also the month began at the time when the thin crescent of the new Moon was first visible (or when three stars became visible); this was of course very soon after sunset.

The Feast of Passover was on the fourteenth day of the first month (Exod. xii. 6), which was full moon. The month only began when the thin crescent of the Moon was first visible, and this is generally about a day later than true or astronomical new Moon.

As the wheat harvest was about a month later than the barley, and as the crops were later on the coast plains than in the deep valley of the Jordan, and later still on the Judæan hills, the entire harvest extended over a considerable time, and consequently the Feast of Harvest or Pentecost was not held till seven weeks (Deut. xvi. 9, 10) after the offering of the wave sheaf of first-fruits (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11).

The great Feast of Tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Lev. xxiii. 33, 34) in the autumn, or six lunar months after the conclusion of the Passover day. The Feast of Tabernacles was also called that of Ingathering, because all the fruits of the earth had then been gathered in.

For our purposes we may approximately estimate that Passover was generally soon after the Vernal equinox—say about the beginning of April, and Tabernacles was very soon after the Autumnal equinox—say about the end of September; and the intervening Feast of Harvest, fifty days after the Sabbath after the Passover, was about the middle of

May. If greater accuracy in any year is required, it can be obtained by consulting tables of new and full Moons, such as those published in Dr. Grattan Guinness' book *Creation Centred in Christ*.

### (*b*) *The Month of the Crucifixion.*

Can we determine on which full Moon in the spring the Crucifixion took place, assuming the generally accepted date A.D. 29? It is known from the astronomical tables that there was a full Moon on the 18th March, and another on the 17th April in that year. Which of these full Moons indicated the Passover when the Crucifixion took place?

According to the present Jewish astronomical method of calculation, the Passover is always placed *after* the equinox, consequently the 18th March would be excluded; but in Bible times the condition of the crops settled the question, and according to Clinton, as we have already noticed, the Passover was sometimes begun a few days before the equinox.

Dr. Grattan Guinness[1] points out that the full Moon of 18th March, A.D. 29, was a Friday, while the full Moon of 17th April of the same year was a Sunday; consequently if the Crucifixion took place on a Friday (which is generally allowed), and if it were in April, A.D. 29, it must have been on the 15th of April, or the *twelfth* day of the lunar month—one day nineteen hours *before* full Moon; it is difficult to conceive that this departure from the Mosaic Law could have occurred; the conclusion therefore which he arrives at, and which appears to be correct, is that the supreme Passover was according to the normal arrangement at full Moon on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, and not one day nineteen hours before it on the twelfth day; consequently

[1] *The Approaching End of the Age*, Appendix, p. 523.

it was on 18th March, A.D. 29; as a further consequence the Resurrection on the first day of the week was just before the Vernal equinox.

In agreement with this estimate that the Crucifixion was on the earlier of the two possible dates, we read that the servants and officers on the night of the betrayal before the Crucifixion "made a fire of coals; for it was cold; and they were warming themselves" (John xviii. 18); the insertion of the words "for it was cold" leads us to suppose that it was not always so on the night before the Passover; this argument must not, however, be pressed too far, as spring weather in Jerusalem is uncertain; the Rev. Dr. Jessop of Beyrût stating, as we have already noticed (p. 160), that he has known snow there as late as the 10th April (in 1886), when his son was snowed up for two days in Bethel. We can only say that the use of the fire points to the earlier date being slightly the more probable of the two.

Going backwards: in A.D. 28 there was a full Moon on the 29th March, which must have been the Passover, the full Moons before and after being too early and too late respectively. Thus the Hebrew year from the first month A.D. 28 to the first month A.D. 29 contained twelve lunations or 354 days, if the Crucifixion were on the 18th March,—thirteen months or 384 days, if the Crucifixion were on the 14th April, A.D. 29.

In A.D. 27 there was a full Moon on 10th April, which must have been the Passover on that year. The year from first month A.D. 27 to first month A.D. 28 contained twelve lunar months or 354 days.

### (*c*) *An Intercalary Month in the Sabbath Year in the Lord's Ministry.*

In A.D. 26 there was a full Moon on the 22nd March, only one day before the equinox, most probably the Passover,

unless the crops were abnormally late, as we have already noted that the Passover was formerly at times held a few days before the equinox. The year from the first month A.D. 26 to the first month A.D. 27 must thus have contained thirteen months (or 384 days), the added or intercalary month being the one just before Passover month A.D. 27.

It follows therefore that the Sabbath year which was contained in the Lord's Ministry, and which began at Tabernacles A.D. 26, must also have contained an extra (thirteenth) month.

## (B) THE CRUCIFIXION AND THE PASCHAL LAMBS.

The Rev. A. H. F. Boughey, M.A., Senior Dean of Trinity College, Cambridge, kindly sends the following communication:—

"(*a*) *The Probability of the Lord's Death synchronising exactly with the killing of the Paschal Lambs.*

"Our Lord died *just after* 3 P.M. (Mark xv. 34-37). This was probably (I think almost, if not quite, *certainly*) the *fourteenth* day of Nisan. (The point is controverted: some think it was the *fifteenth;* the arguments are too long to enter into here, but I think they *all*, when properly investigated, point to the *fourteenth.*) The paschal lambs were (*α*) *killed* on the *fourteenth* day of Nisan, (*β*) *eaten* on the *fifteenth* day of Nisan, which was the second and *great* day of the paschal festival. (Note that *sunset* came between two Jewish days, *always* ending one and commencing the next: modern writers are constantly forgetting this, and they blunder hopelessly by doing so.)

"The lambs, being killed on the fourteenth, *must* certainly have been killed *before sunset.* They were eaten later on,

when it was dark and they had been roasted; *we* should call this the same day, to the Jews it was the next day.

"At *what hour* were the lambs killed? Two passages of the Old Testament bear specially on this:—

"(i.) Deuteronomy xvi. 6—'*in* the evening, *about* the going down of the sun'. This is a *vague* expression, and *not* an exact one meaning 'exactly at sunset,' for the preposition is כ, which is explained in the lexicons '. . . de tempore, *circa, circiter*'. *Cf.* 1 Kings xxii. 35, 36—'and the king . . . died at even . . . and there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun . . .'; the two expressions here are the *same* as in Deuteronomy xvi. 6, '*in* the evening,' '*about* the going down,' etc. In 1 Kings xxii. both the death of the king, and the proclamation which *followed* it, probably took place *before* the moment of sunset.

"(ii.) Exodus xii. 6—'*between the evenings*'. A difficult expression, admitting of different interpretations; which is the most likely?

"Now we know the Jewish *practice* in the time of our Lord: Josephus (*Bell. Jud.*, vi., ix., 3) tells us the paschal lambs were slain 'from the ninth hour to the eleventh,' *i.e.*, from 3 to 5 P.M. We know also some Jewish *interpretations* of 'between the evenings'.

"(*a*) The Karaites and Samaritans explained it as 'between sunset and dark'. This is clearly incompatible both with the practice mentioned by Josephus and with the rule for the killing on the *fourteenth* day of Nisan; *after* sunset would be the *fifteenth*.

"(*b*) The Pharisees and Rabbinists generally held that the first evening began when the sun commenced to decline (δείλη πρωΐα), the second when the sun set (δείλη ὀψία).

"(*c*) A few Rabbinists held that the two evenings are the

times immediately before and after sunset, the moment of sunset dividing them.

"Interpretations (*b*) and (*c*) seem to be on the right lines; only (*c*) is too narrow—leave out 'immediately,' and it agrees with (*b*). Now (*b*) I think is quite right; but can we go further, and say *when* the sun commenced to decline, or might fairly be considered to do so? A point midway between noon and sunset may very well be taken. In a country where sunset is never very far from 6 P.M., this point will be about 3 P.M. For the first three hours after noon the sun declines very little; during the last three hours it declines rapidly, and this may very well be named the 'first evening,' the next three hours, following sunset, being the 'second evening' (being indeed the '*evening watch*'—6 to 9 P.M.—the first watch of the night).

"The period between 3 and 6 P.M. suits the expression in Exodus, and suits it better than any other that has been offered. Also, it fits in with Deuteronomy xvi. 6; a thing which took place while the sun was declining may rightly be said to be 'in the evening' and 'about the going down of the sun'.

"Anyhow, such was a Jewish interpretation, and such was certainly—what is of the greatest importance—the Jewish *practice* at the time of Christ's death. Josephus seems most precise and accurate in this matter: he says the *killing* (in the Temple) was from 3 to 5, not 3 to 6 as we might have expected; on reflection we see that it was right to finish the killing an hour before sunset: the lambs had to be carried home and prepared for the cooking—and to Jewish minds it was most desirable that this should be done on the 'preparation' day of the festival, *i.e.*, before sunset, which ended 14th Nisan—nothing but the actual roasting being left for *the* great and holy day, 15th Nisan.

"There were thousands of lambs to be killed in the Temple. Clearly the *earliest* should be killed immediately after 3 P.M., 'the ninth hour,' the beginning of the 'first evening'. It was immediately after 'the ninth hour' that τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός (1 Cor. v. 7), the great High Priest offered up His own life—the life of the Lamb of God, of one thereafter called ἀρνίον ὡς ἐσφαγμένον—to take away the sins of the world.

"Such is the view which I venture to take of this more than probable synchronism. For more, see the *Speaker's Commentary* (Canon Cook on Exod. xii. 6, and Dean Mansel on Matt. xxvi. 20); Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible* (ii., 714, *s.v.* 'Passover'); Dean Farrar (St. Luke in *Camb. Gk. Test. for Schools*, p. 369 and p. 421, 'There was a peculiar symbolic fitness in the fact that He—the True Lamb—was offered at the very time when the lamb which was but a type was being sacrificed'); Mr. A. Carr (St. Matthew in *Camb. Gk. Test. for Schools*, note on xxvi. 17); and others."

### (*b*) *Changes of the Sun's Altitude.*

In support of the foregoing assumption that the expression "at the going down of the sun" (Deut. xvi. 6) probably means about 3 P.M., we must remember ancient methods of description; for instance in an old book on gunnery the motion of a projectile in the air is described as at first the motion of ascent, at last the motion of descent, with an intermediate mixed motion (*motus mixtus*).

At the present time, an intelligent native of India[1] (and of the East generally), if he has no watch, will roughly measure the altitude of the sun at any time of day by holding up his hand at a fixed distance. In the morning and evening when the altitude of the sun changes rapidly he

[1] *Statement*, Lt.-Col. F. Roberts, *late* R.A.

will make good estimates; but in the middle of the day when the variation of altitude is far slower his estimates of the time become inaccurate.

This distinction in the movement of the sun (between the times when the altitude varies quickly and slowly) is still observed in ordinary nautical astronomy. Observations for finding the local time, from which the longitude is obtained, are practically always made before about 9 A.M. or after 3 P.M., while observations for latitude are made near to noon, when the altitude of the sun varies very slowly.

The time of "the going down of the sun" may therefore well have been when the descending movement first becomes of a decided character, which is at about 3 P.M.

## 2 PETER i. 19.

This verse presents difficulties, because the English translations (A.V., R.V., W.T. and Rotherham's) all place two facts of Nature in the wrong order, when they state "until the day dawn and the Day Star appear".

The Greek word rendered "day star" is *φωσφόρος*, which means literally "light bearer". In classical Greek, as already noticed (p. 34), this word means a particular light bearer—Artemis, who is connected with the Morning or Day Star (and in modern Italian the Morning Star is described by the cognate word *lucifero*); but because it had that signification in classical Greek it does not at all follow that the same meaning was attached to the word under all circumstances of time and place.

If we suppose that in this passage *φωσφόρος* means the great light bearer, the Sun, the difficulty of the wrong order of the events of Nature disappears, and the sentence reads in the dual-balanced form so common among Hebrew writers; compare the words "until the day break, and the

shadows flee away" (Song of Sol. ii. 17, iv. 6, A.V.), and also the words used by the Apostle Peter in this very same chapter as the text under consideration, *e.g.* "life and godliness," "glory and virtue" (verse 3), "great and precious promises" (verse 4), etc.

Milton[1] uses the word Day Star to mean the Sun; consequently it is very possible that the translators of our Authorised Version may have intended to refer to the great luminary in the passage under consideration.

But though the Morning Star would thus disappear from the end of this verse (2 Pet. i. 19), may we not strangely enough possibly find it figured to us under the word *lamp* (λύχνος) in the middle of the same verse? for this same Greek word is used in John v. 35, applied to the Baptist, "the lamp that burneth and shineth". As we have concluded (p. 66) that λύχνος represents the Morning Star in that passage, it seems natural to conclude that the Morning Star may also be intended by the same word in 2 Peter i. 19; the passages are so similar to each other in construction and apparent meaning that a reference is given in our Bibles from each to the other. We notice, however, that the Greek article is twice used in the verse in John; but it is not employed at all in the passage in Peter.

In 2 Peter i. 19 we are exhorted to give heed to the word of prophecy as unto a lamp shining in a dark place. The use of the verb *to give heed* seems to suggest that λύχνος means the herald of dawn, because with an ordinary lamp attention is drawn to the objects revealed by the light, and not to the lamp itself.

Except in these two passages λύχνος is generally used in the New Testament in its literal meaning of a lamp; but in Revelation xxii. 5 ("they need no light of lamp, neither

[1] *Lycidas*, l. 168.

light of Sun") it seems very possible that it may again mean the Morning Star, for it would appear that the connection between the herald of dawn and the Sun would be more obvious to the first readers of the Book of the Revelation, than between a literal lamp and the light of the Sun; that two heavenly bodies are alluded to seems likely from the somewhat parallel passage in Revelation xxi. 23, when it is stated there is "no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon"—two heavenly lights being spoken of in the same connection, not a heavenly one and a terrestrial one. When we remember the very great attention given to the Morning Star in New Testament times, it would seem to be probable that λύχνος in Revelation xxii. 5 may mean that planet.

## (D) GOSPEL CHRONOLOGY

of events considered in this book.

| No. | Event. | Approximate Month. |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Announcement to Zacharias | July. |
| 2 | Annunciation to Mary | December. |
| 3 | Prenatal witness of John | December. |
| 4 | Birth of John | April. |
| 5 | Nativity | September. |
| 6 | Purification | November. |
| 7 | Visit of the Magi | December. |
| 8 | Departure to Egypt | December. |
| 9 | Murder of the infants | December. |
| 10 | Death of Herod | March. |
| 11 | Return from Egypt | April. |
| 12 | Visit of Jesus to Jerusalem at twelve years of age. "My Father's business." | April. |
| 13 | Death of Judas of Galilee | Not known. |
| 14 | John the Baptist began ministry | April. |
| 15 | Baptism | August. |
| 16 | Temptation | Aug. and Sept. |
| 17 | Christ began ministry | September. |
| 18 | "He . . . increase . . . I decrease" | April. |
| 19 | Imprisonment of John | April. |
| 20 | Reading, Isa. lxi. | September. |
| 21 | Quotation, Isa. ix., xlii. | September. |
| 22 | "He was the Lamp" | April. |
| 23 | "My Father worketh" | April. |
| 24 | The Lord's Prayer | May. |
| 25 | Anxiety reproved | May. |
| 26 | "My messenger before Thy face" | May. |
| 27 | "Harvest is plenteous" | May. |
| 28 | "My yoke is easy" | May. |
| 29 | Plucking corn | May. |
| 30 | "Lord of the Sabbath" | May. |
| 31 | Quotation, Isa. xlii. | September. |
| 32 | Parables on sowing | December. |
| 33 | Death of John | April. |
| 34 | Feeding 5,000 | April. |
| 35 | "Ye seek Me not," etc. | April. |
| 36 | "The children first" | April. |
| 37 | Feeding 4,000 | April. |
| 38 | "The Light of the World" | September. |
| 39 | Old questions | December. |
| 40 | Visit to Bethabara | December. |
| 41 | The Lord's Supper | March. |
| 42 | Crucifixion | March. |
| 43 | Ascension | May. |
| 44 | Day of Pentecost, descent of the Holy Spirit. | May. |

| No. | Year. | Feast or Season. | References. | |
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| 7 | 8. | ——— | (*g*) VI. | 197 |
| 8 | 8. | ——— | (*h*) VI. | 199 |
| 9 | 8. | ——— | (*i*) VI. | 199 |
| 10 | 4. | Just before Passover. | (*j*) VI. | 200 |
| 11 | 3. | Passover. | (*k*) VI. | 200 |
| | A.D. | | | |
| 12 | 6. | Passover. | (*l*) VI. | 202 |
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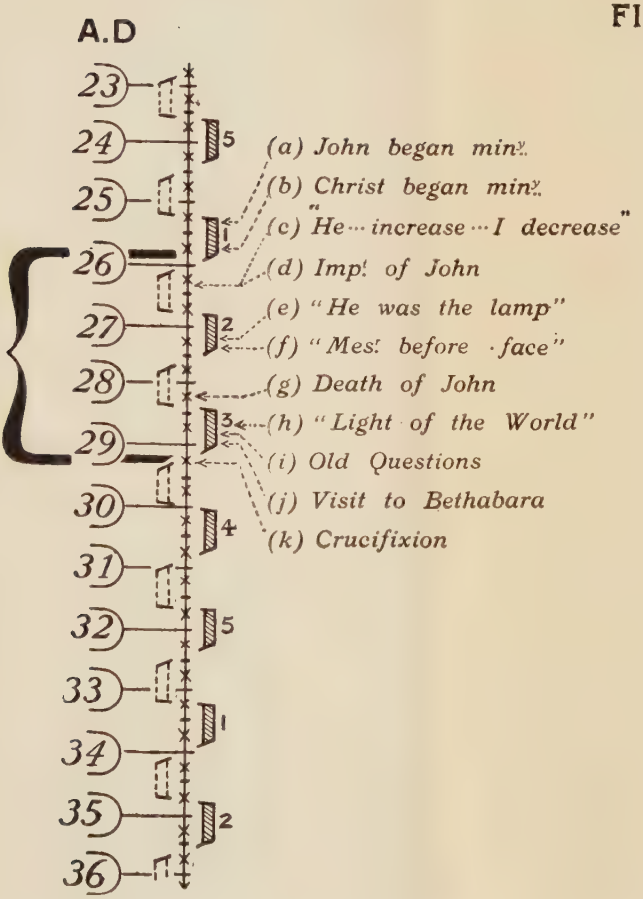
# THE MORNING STAR

## IN THE GOSPELS

FIG. IV.




*For explanation see p. 56*

# THE SABBATH YEAR

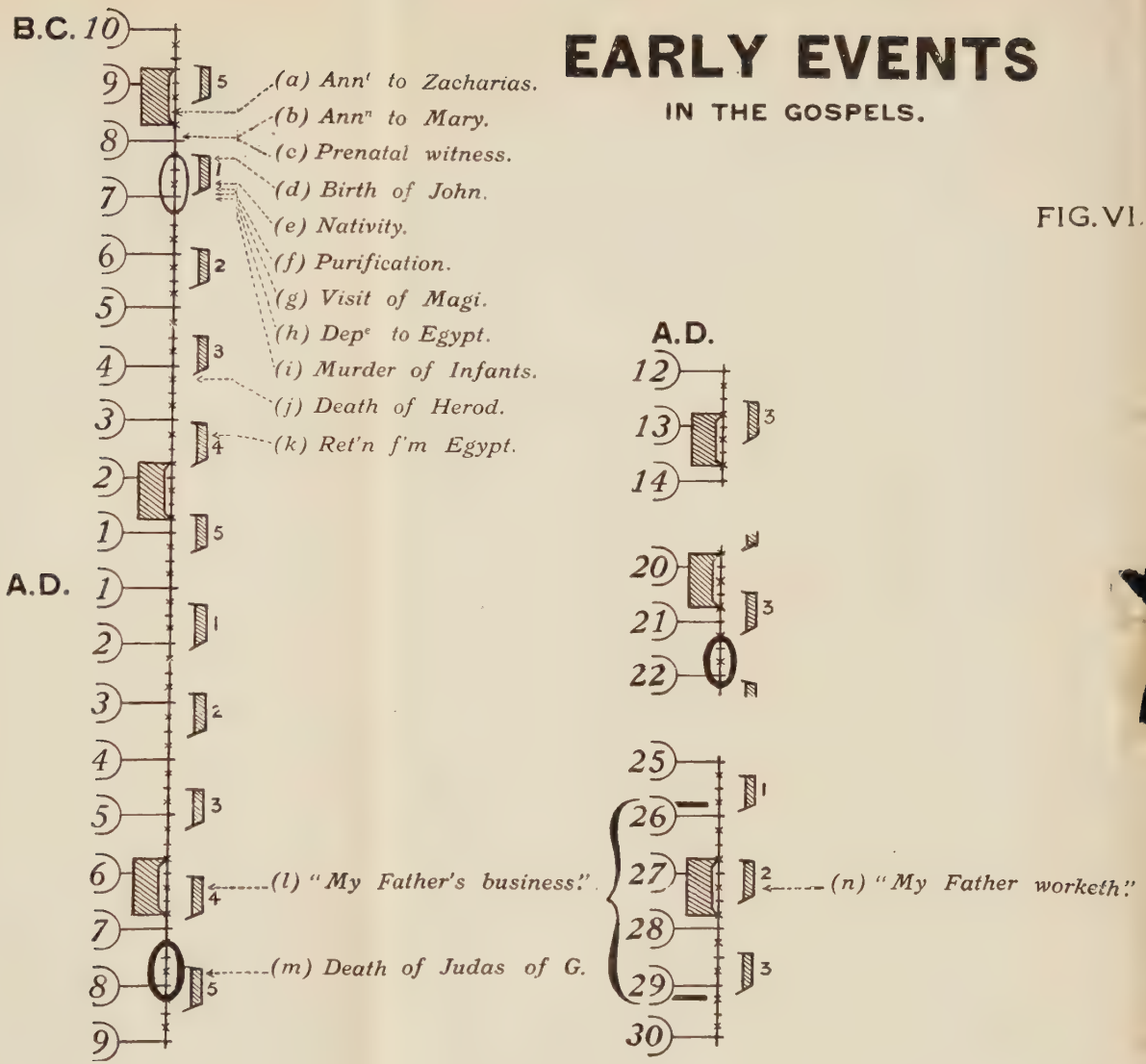
IN THE GOSPELS

FIG. V.

*For explanation see p. 105*

# EARLY EVENTS
## IN THE GOSPELS.

FIG. VI.




For explanation see p. 139

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